

INSIDE FRONT



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HARDCORE PUNK AND ANARCHIST ACTION
BACK FROM THE DEAD TO SMASH CAPITALISM

Postscript
Issue #∞

THIS MEANS WAR.

SKULLDUGGERY! MUGWUMPERY! BEDLAM IN BABYLON!
Includes 18-track compilation of cutting edge hardcore punk

Justice From "Remission (Before)" Compilation CD

1. Prelude: Our Leader Speaks

First Movement: Foreign Agents

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 2. | Cathode | "Stranglehold" |
| 3. | The Spectacle | "Between" |
| 4. | Burn Hollywood
Burn | "Love (as we know
it) hurts with or
without you" |
| 5. | Carahter | "Lider" |
| 6. | Bora | "Following Rules" |

Second Movement: Domestic Threats

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 7. | Countdown to
Putsch | "The Cure is the
Poison" |
| 8. | Dead Things | "Education
Breakdown" |
| 9. | Blacken the Skies | "Wrench and
Bone" |
| 10. | Witch Hunt | "Fed Up" |
| 11. | Breed/Extinction | "Ashes vs. Leaves" |

Third Movement: The Ghost of Punk Rock Past

- | | | |
|-----|------------------|--|
| 12. | Driven | [the last two Driven
songs] |
| 13. | Driven | |
| 14. | Society of Jesus | [the last two S.O.J.
songs] |
| 15. | Society of Jesus | |
| 16. | By All Means | [the last B.A.M.
recording—a cover
song] |

Fourth Movement: The Spectre of the Future

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 17. | (The Olympia D.I.Y. Percussion and
Choral Ensemble featuring soloists)
Herds and Words |
| 18. | Conclusion: Dawn |



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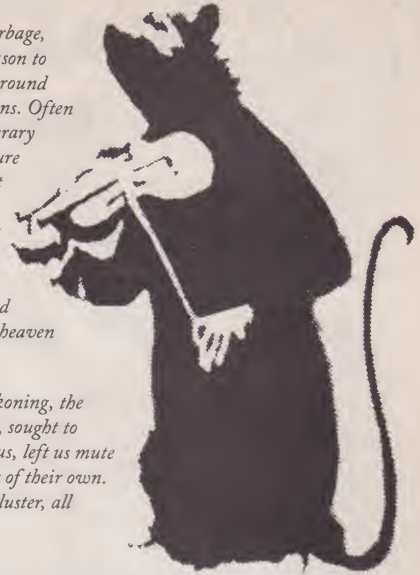
This magazine and CD are \$5 postpaid in the USA (\$7 world), and five or more copies \$3.50 each postpaid in the USA (\$5 world), from the address on the back cover.

Anti-Fucking-Goddamn-Copyright 2003. Few animals were harmed in the production of this zine.

Please note that there is not a single advertisement in this entire issue, barring the catalog of other materials our collective has produced. We're willing to take a financial loss here in hopes that we can encourage a less commercial approach to publishing in our subcultural community, as a small step in moving away from capitalist models altogether.

That was our youth, although it had taken a long time for some of us to arrive there. We ate nothing, or garbage, or the most vile of swill, supplied by a religious cult group—apparently the only ones who still saw any reason to keep us alive. Our real nourishment came in the form of letters from far off lands, tales of street riots told around the coals of burnt-out love affairs, a tape of a Finnish metal band with the most melodramatic of pretensions. Often our lives were saved only by a sunny spring day in January, or a book of poetry found on some neglected library shelf and read aloud on the railroad tracks before midnight, or the revelation of a dance move in some obscure band's performance. We carved esoteric slogans into unlikely surfaces, shared photocopies of strangers' secret ambitions and nonsensical demands, composed and destroyed endless drafts of unsendable love letters to impossible subjects of the wildest fantasies we could conceive. Despising documentation, losing journals, lacking resources, we made our bodies the canvases upon which we painted the epic artwork of our desperate lives. We were gods, dispossessed angels singing the arrival of some hidden hermits' paradise on earth; we were bandit queens and pauper kings, led gloriously astray by the fever dreams of our power-mad monasticism. We had nothing—we would be everything. We were invincible, irresistible, ridiculous, and heaven smiled on us from below.

Those precious dreams treated us as we, consequently, treated each other as lovers: the soaring moments beckoning, the beauty longed for, shining from afar—and then when we turned away from everything else towards them, sought to embrace them, to bend every moment of life, every fiber of being to their pursuit, they scorned us, shunned us, left us mute and broken, incomprehensible to the crowds around us who, too, were pursuing dreams, though not dreams of their own. We rejected our crazy dreams, then, furious, broken-hearted; but in their wake, all other plans seemed lackluster, all hopes half-hearted, and one by one we began returning, to soar and burn again.



So here it is, the Inside Front reunion issue, complete with high door price, lackluster performances, and rockstars drinking beer (provided as per the guarantee) backstage, talking shit about the kids.

This should be a eulogy, a cry for the lost dreams and squandered opportunities and unharrowed idealism of our youth, when, dizzy with enthusiasm and inexperience, we vowed insane oaths—to never work, to overthrow everything destructive and make life a never-ending celebration, to seize those sailing moments of passion and make them last forever—oaths that could never possibly be kept by the living. This should be a lament, mourning the passing of those halcyon, idyllic days when we had no problems greater than mere survival in service of those quests, when life and death were so simple and so precious. This should find me bemoaning the senseless surrender of all those irreplaceable gifts to the jaws of time and cynicism, the slow wear of the daily grind—or, worse, declaring, in the centuries-old tradition of the jaded, that real life has come and gone upon this planet once and for all, and if you weren't there to witness it with us you will never be so lucky. At best, this should be the epitaph for a forgotten faction who refused to be turned into slaves and succeeded instead in being turned to dust.

This should be—but it's not. This is the story of what happened when some of us kept those aspirations at the expense of all others, stayed faithful to our muses and missions even when it meant burning up in the wreckage and, harder, living to dwell upon it. Some of us, sworn to fight to the death, haven't died or submitted—not yet! We followed those uncharted paths we swore were ahead of us, we didn't back down, we went for it—and we're still going for it, still struggling to live in such a way that we can be in love with living. This is the story of what we left behind, what we found, what we lost—what we're doing.

We swore to die fighting, and history saw to it that some of us had the chance—that was sobering. Others among us almost prayed for such deliverance, feared we would outlive ourselves waiting for our chance to come. Yet others forswore the whole business as madness or childishness, or found themselves seized by another destiny that had crouched in the shadows awaiting them all along. Holding on to the dream, that we might yet be able to live fighting, that was the hardest thing of all.

Inside Front Reunion issue designed by Jack "Using tabs to begin paragraphs looks stupid" Frost, acting as an agent for the Graphic Violence Artists' Group. All layout work done from library computers with stolen fancy programs and stolen fancy fonts.



Seriously, why another issue of Inside Front?

Introduction from the Editor: We thought the old world was about to come to an end—that's the best I can express it.

Back in 2000/2001, I declared #13 the final issue of this magazine so I could have my hands free for what was to come next. It was coming, that was for sure: with the fall of Communism, the old false dichotomy was gone, and people everywhere were starting to recognize that the only conflict left was between People and Power. Explosions were going off everywhere—world leaders couldn't meet without tens of thousands of protesters showing up to interfere, average folks in average towns were starting to get interested in anarchism, punk kids' well-mannered mothers were joining the anticapitalist struggle with their bodies as well as their hearts. There was always something to do, some chance to join the fray, and we were always working on our next surprise, preparing our part for the next explosion, dreaming impossible dreams about what might be possible next.

Here's a little story that captures the spirit of that period of my life. One summer night, I remember, a thunder storm descended upon the small Southern city some of us called home. A soulful hobo folk band from New York were visiting the wrecked punkhouse where I stayed with an assortment of hell-bent revolutionaries and maladjusted pariahs; they'd just left to dumpster a feast for us all when lightning began to crack across the sky. Two of my dearest friends and I set out for the parking deck downtown to get a better view, but by the time we got half way the rain was coming down in such sheets that we were forced against the side of a building. It was torrential, overwhelming, unearthly; one of us said (whimsically, since it was a hot Southern night) "the only way this could be better would be if it started hailing." At that moment, we heard a tap, and then an answering tap, and an instant later white hail the size of golf balls was drumming down before our widening eyes. It filled up the street, smashed out the lights on the skyscraper we so hated for dominating the skyline, proved beyond a doubt that total transformation is always just around the corner. One of us picked up a hailstone and bit into it; we passed it around, tasting the impossible on our very tongues.

That was what it was like every day, whether we were giving out literature and bagels downtown, playing music together, or pelting riot police with stones—or at least it seems so, in the halcyon glow of memory: anything could happen, and all it took to make it happen was to believe in it.

Then came September 11, 2001, of course. I'm not quite paranoid enough to think it was planned or permitted by our government, though obviously it benefited them in their pursuit of total power; I think it's sufficient to remember that this tragedy was simply the blowback of decades of the U.S. training terrorists and committing crimes against humanity across the world. Whether consciously plotted by capitalists or not, it was certainly characteristic of the capitalist program: terrorize and isolate, turn whole nations and peoples against one another, and cash in on the resulting violence as a chance to clamp down and enforce the demands of silent business-as-usual ever more ruthlessly.

It worked, for a while. Activists were scared into silence, everyone else into compliance, and total war began. We all felt powerless. War is what our enemies do best, it's their final recourse whenever people begin to become aware of their own strength: they create another distraction, another dichotomy, one that makes them appear omnipotent, one that scares the public—at least the public you read about in the mass-media propaganda polls—into lockstep behind them.

It took months for some of us to give in to hopelessness and paralysis, but eventually they set in seemingly everywhere. I was gone when the buildings came down—my band had embarked on an insane project, a five-months-straight tour of Europe that almost destroyed us—and when I returned, all my friends were scattered and dispirited, the punk and anarchist and activist communities were all a mess of back-biting and uncertainty, and all the energy and possibility we'd felt before seemed gone. I held it off as long as I could, but as my band broke up, my love relationships fell apart, and my friends disappeared, a serious, deep depression set in. I kept up what activities I could, but as a writer I was blocked, as a lover I was exhausted, as a revolutionary I was stumped.

I guess that's the critical juncture all of us hit at some point in life: events in the world and our own lives alike seem to spiral out of control, and we're left feeling as though we're watching from the sidelines. This is when people cease to think of themselves as having a destiny of their own and go into survival mode, cutting off their feelings, living in denial, no longer hoping. Some are born into this existence, learning it from the sufferers who raise them; others have to be taught it through failure, oppression, defeat. It wasn't what I wanted, that's for sure—I desperately wanted back the feeling that my life belonged to me, and I didn't want to live without it. I only remained alive, honestly, because I knew from previous experience that such suicidal depressions can pass.

And they do pass. Now the tide is turning. Our enemies rushed too fast to consolidate their power ("if you're not with us, you're against us") as soon as they had the excuse—perhaps that power was more fragile than we thought?—and now they've lost all the advantages it gave them ("well, I'm not really with them... does that mean I'm...?"). As Nietzsche said, a healthy organism can tolerate a whole army of parasites—a dying creature needs a Department of Homeland Security to stave off the inevitable as long as possible. From here on, the lines can only become clearer again: it's People versus Power, once more. After the rush of war is over, as the terrorist threat intensifies (no one needs a government to fund a terrorist action—one only needs hatred and a boxcutter) and the economy crumbles, it will only become more obvious to people that their rulers have been endangering them simply to consolidate their own power. We should not have panicked so fast after that day in September—we're going to need to be prepared to maintain our projects and morale through worse disasters, if we're going to go the distance to revolution. If anything good can come out of that tragedy, I hope it is a new sturdiness in our community: next time the terrorists strike, we need to be ready to respond immediately, visibly offering our perspective and solutions, before the government can put their spin on it—not hide out in doubt and fear. Besides—if we anarchists are right about where terrorism comes from, our

doubt and fear can only result in more deaths in the long run.

I'm writing this the night after the United States declared war on Iraq, the night after thousands of activists across the world declared and reaffirmed their corresponding war against tyranny by shutting down freeways, schools, and shopping districts. After the terrorist attacks in the U.S., there was a period when nationalist patriotism owned the streets: flags and jingoistic propaganda lined every window and bumper, and if you didn't subscribe to bloodthirsty groupthink you felt isolated and endangered. Now, whatever their bullshit polls claim, the atmosphere on the streets belongs to us again—and, unlike before the terrorists brought home to the West the destruction capitalism is wreaking across the face of the world, the issues are so close at hand that no one can deny we all must take a stand somewhere. No matter what happens next, even if there are more terrorist attacks, there will be no going back to those days of paralysis and silence. Let's hope there won't be more—but let's do more than hope: we need to disable and eventually overthrow the government that, with their imperialist economic and political policies, is provoking people into killing us.

Forget that slogan "another world is possible"—another world is *inevitable*. The old world is going to come to an end, my friends, make no mistake about that. However much firepower they have, however many crippled nations they destroy, our oppressors and the entire culture that supports them are doomed—the planet itself cannot sustain them or their way of life much longer. But this final cataclysm isn't something we should just await, or fear—it will be what we make of it, and we have to be preparing for it right now. We have to learn how to get along with each other, we have to develop our strength and the support systems in our communities, we have to be practicing anarchy right now, or else the crash that's coming will only make things worse. Fortunately, there are conflicts to be fought, crazy plans to carry out, communities to bring together—excellent opportunities everywhere for us to learn and build for the future. We grew up reading J.R.R. Tolkien and listening to punk songs, dreaming of fighting in the final clash

between destruction and rebirth—my friends, it's upon us.

So, once more—why another Inside Front? Because—if you ask me—when everything you're doing almost works only to crash and burn before your eyes, you don't retire on the ruins of your former idealism, you take a step back to what you were doing before the disaster and start from there again. Editing this magazine is something I've done for a decade now, it's something I know how to do, and it's always troubled me how many beautiful songs and books and projects have never entered the world because the people who could create them, by the time they were finally experienced enough to, were too jaded and beaten to do so. This project, however imperfect it may be, exists now—it's no record that was almost recorded or last show that was never played. Too often, we criticize ourselves and our ideas so much that we forget that an idea that comes to fruition, blemishes and all, is always better than one that dies on the vine.

And why punk rock, why haven't we grown out of it after all these years? However small it may be, I think punk rock will have an important role to play in this struggle for a long time to come. However many disillusioned punks-turned-activists, going through their final phase of adolescence, may need to rebel against the crucible of their rebellion, claiming it to be a dead end ghetto, punk rock is still the milieu that spawns them, generation after generation. However insufferable the obvious shortcomings of all subcultures are, we still desperately need places to come together in this isolating world, to get to know one another and get practice working and playing together. Whatever the stakes in the struggle, it's critical we make beauty together as well as fight its destroyers.

Here's another little story to illustrate this. Two weeks ago the Canadian band *Godspeed, You Black Emperor!* played here in the small college town that has often been my home. It was going to be just another mediated performance, the spectators watching the band before departing alone—but we troublemakers had something else in mind. As the concertgoers left the club, bucket-drums appeared from nowhere and were

distributed along with drumsticks, signs, and great banners. Before the local authorities had time to recognize what was happening, two hundred people had surprised themselves by taking over the main street of the town! We marched up and down it for an hour and a half, blocking it completely as the bars were emptying out, and the police, caught totally unprepared, were unable to stop us or even arrest anyone. That tiny triumph gave those same kids the experience and confidence they needed to fill and block the street again at rush hour tonight—and this time, a few hundred people from other walks of life joined us, pouring into the space we opened. Punk rock, a dead end ghetto? Only if we want it to be. Better a breeding ground for revolutionaries!

That's the vision of punk rock and underground culture I've treasured for the past decade, and it's as bright as ever now. We can resurrect punk rock, just as it resurrected us, as a site of escape and resistance and a seed of an utterly different world. Indeed, we *need* to keep punk rock, or something like it, alive: to steal children for the revolution from the families of the middle and working classes, to offer space for those who are alienated by activist smugness but still seek an outlet for their rebellious energies, to be sure we always remember that this struggle is even more about making our own artwork and life stories than it is about resisting those who would destroy them. Punk rock, by whatever name, will be essential until the day all constraints are destroyed and *everything* is music, is togetherness, is adventure.

So here it is, a surprise issue of my old hardcore magazine, as part of my own rejuvenation, in case it can help to rejuvenate our community—and to reaffirm, once more, the worst nightmares of the powers that be: *yes, we're still here.*

Still passionate, still loving and fighting, and, if anything, younger and crazier than I was when I began the first issue of Inside Front a decade ago—yours sincerely, editor B.

LETTERBOMBS FROM THE EDITOR

"When your friends misunderstand your works and your enemies understand them all too well, when waking up every new morning feels like a defeat rather than a triumph, when the razor blade or the cliff's edge beckons, remember—he is not pretty, death, only well-advertised. Remember what they did to Michelangelo: they waited until he was dead and then painted over all the genitals in his Sistine Chapel—just as Nietzsche's hated racist sister presented him to the world as a proto-fascist genius after he lost his mind, just as Paul used Jesus, and Plato Socrates, and the Communists Durrutti. Give your enemies nothing. Let your tears freeze to stones we can hurl from catapults, screaming. Write your own epitaph and say it out loud, still alive. This life is a war we are not yet winning for our daughters' children. Don't do your enemies' work for them—finish your own."—from a letter that didn't reach Sylvia Plath in time

A gesture of frustration—a letter I'd like to send to certain kids too enamored of their own disenchantment:

Dear -----,
So the dreams we celebrated so passionately, so convincingly, have failed you—or, more precisely, you have failed to attain them. Well! In that, at least, we could find a kinship, for the same tragedy has befallen me—far more frequently and painfully than it can have for you yet, I dare say. But it's not kinship you're looking for, is it? Perhaps, instead, this exaggerated disappointment of yours is your roundabout way of claiming a position of righteousness, the same righteousness you must have mistaken me as laying claim to... so you have found your own superiority, your own self-importance, but one predicated on failure! As if I was trying to put myself on a pedestal, by proposing all those impossible possibilities—but you, at least, are "honest": it's all hopeless, it's all a scam, all is failure and anyone who tells you different must be out for himself. Bah!

I'll be vulnerable and admit to you—yes, it's hard, it gets so fucking hard to go for it without disclaimers or self-consciousness, when our enemies are still enthroned in all their power despite our every attempt, when all the bands whose youthful idealism and indomitable spirit seemed poised to overthrow capitalism itself grow out of it and into making a career for themselves—when I find out that the moments I felt most free, like we'd all exploded through the shackles altogether, someone else was feeling alienated and angry. So what can I do—what can we do?

Go for it without disclaimers and self-consciousness, obviously! Learn what we can from the critics and critiques, derive whatever constructive insights can be gleaned from them regardless of whether they were intended constructively or not, shake off the rest—forget about it, fuck it all, you're

never going to win everyone's approval (was that what your revolution was about?) and tragedies are bound to happen, that's life—and go for it without disclaimers or self-consciousness.

My friend, you're giving up too soon and too easily. It wouldn't be such a stupid, senseless tragedy if we had enough the time to spare for you to loiter in the sullen adolescence of cynicism for a few more years—but we don't, we really don't. Should we let everything we've learned go to waste? We've done a lot, even you have to admit that—you do yourself whenever you parade your former credentials in the course of making your case for disillusionment. Maybe we did it all wrong—now that we know how we'd do it if we had the chance again, why not do it again and do it right? Could you find it within yourself to believe in something again, could you forgive the world enough, forgive yourself enough to fall in love once more? All those things you loved—that beauty you never found words for, the adrenaline rush of risk, the feeling that the fate of the world itself hinged on your actions—they're still out there, they still await you. You're the one that turned away from them—and without you, I'm afraid I can't find my way back to them either. Try this with me, once more. It won't be easy—it won't be any easier than it was the first time. It will probably end in disaster, once again. But it'll be better than the sour grapes of deliberate failure. Suicide would be a nobler option than that.

Your old friend, -----

A dispatch of desperation—a letter I wrote, in a particularly dark period, to my comrades at the San Francisco anarchist bookfair, 2002, but never circulated:

Dear anarchist, beautiful anarchist—

How do I say this, what words are left when we've burned up all our rhetoric on abstractions, glorifying the ghosts we keep close at hand to make this life more bearable?

I had another panic attack tonight, just now, five minutes ago, like I used to in the years before that week in Seattle—I wanted to tear out my eyes so I'd never see another smug, uncontested Starbucks or Shell station, rip off these fingers that might not write the letter (whatever letter it is!) that could set off the next skirmish, throw myself off a goddamn bridge. The worst part is—I feel responsible, responsible now for always having an optimistic, bright vision, to help out in those moments when you might not—even though I know that's bullshit!—but anyway, my fear is all I have to offer tonight, and there's enough of it to go around, so I'll share that.

We make it from year to year, some of us, in this world that denies all our dreams, by believing in miracles—that is the miracle, itself, and it's no mean feat. I've been in that world—spent days in it, weeks in it even—where everything was about to change, was in fact changing. Now when, on those days when I can't find my way back, my companions try to reassure me ("you can't change the world, but you can change one life"—etc., etc.), it makes me fucking crazy—for I know that world of pragmatism and "being realistic" is the counterfeit world, the illusion. If I never again experience what I experienced in those soaring hours, I will go to my grave insisting still that those transcendent moments of possibility were the real world, that this is just a farce, a stand-in world of false fronts until we can get to the next of them. If historians write about me (curse them if they do!) one hundred years hence, noting that I was wrong about what would happen, that will take place in an alternate universe, not the one I believe in, not the one I live in.

I am terrified: I'm terrified that we'll use today just to recruit for our little competing clubs, to argue over trifles and maybe fight for table scraps. I'm terrified that too many of you will have arrived here like I did, not knowing what you will try here or, worse, what direction to go next—and that all of us



will consequently do our best to feel like what we're doing, or not doing, is good enough. I'm terrified we'll find, despite all our swaggering to the contrary, the resignation to survive here—here, in our safe ghetto, with the Palestinians and veal calves dying outside—and die here ourselves, too, even if only by waking day after day to say “I live” and mean it as something other than a victory.

If we were brave or reckless enough for it, our despair—for those of us who feel it sometimes, and I hope we're a small minority—could be a resource as great as any other. It could enable us to do the things our comrades, with their hope and high spirits, shouldn't have to do to make things happen. Otherwise, it is a burden of shame for us to hide, and truly an enemy to fear. Pride would hold us forever in no-win situations, struggling to prove that we can make them work, insisting that we are happy, that everything is going according to plan. We nail ourselves in place here in the same way some pledge themselves to love relationships of mutual misery, trying to prove to themselves they are “good enough” to make each other happy. It takes a ruthless mercy to discard sentimentality and remember all the things that never happened and *still might never happen*, all the dreams that never came true—we can't wait forever, there's not time enough for that. Impatience is a virtue.

Whether or not you suffer these attacks of fear and nihilism, know this: those actions you are considering, that book you're thinking of writing, that hand you might try to extend—we need those, all of us, so badly now—don't you dare hold back out of insecurity or anything else! I've seen too many of my friends die now, driving themselves into living graves or earthen ones, because the world didn't seem wide enough to hold what they wanted. That's what we should be doing here, above all, I feel: widening the world, so the next generation of dreamers can join us, bringing their hope or despair or whatever it is they have to offer; together, we could break down the gates to that other world I talk about, once and for all. I still believe this can happen, is happening, must happen.

*Still in love with all of you and the amazing things we can do,
An anonymous and abashed CrimethInc. ex-worker*

And, sadly, a eulogy for my beloved, departed friend Emma Berger, a beautiful, courageous woman who did indeed live each day like it was her last—written by another friend of mine who is, let's not take this for granted, still with us as I type this.

Dear Emma,

This is not a eulogy; this is not a eulogy because I will not let you die. Just over a year ago I lost a very important person in my life in a car accident. Emma Berger, 21, deceased. That feeling in your gut when someone tells you they have bad news, the split second that you think about the death of a loved one, the empty feeling when you learn you're right. I had talked to her just the night before, but only for a second; I was on my way to work. They were on their way home, we were going to have a party, her voice was on the fucking answering machine for christakes. This was my first experience with loss, it was terrifying. People cried and wailed but I just sat there. Stone. Dry mouth and dry eyes. I felt dead. In the days to follow I would go from picturing gruesome, disfigured bodies strewn across the highway to going about my day as if nothing had happened. As the days turned to weeks and we tried desperately to pick up the pieces, I began to remember every little detail about her. Her eyes, her laugh, all those little stories she would tell. Its funny, I had met Emma only a couple of times in the years before, hanging out for a few hours while she was passing through Detroit. Then in October of 2001 she showed up at my house again, this time to stay awhile, and something happened. We connected; it was amazing, unexpected. I don't think I slept for the next two weeks, we stayed up all night talking, telling stories, past and present, hopes and dreams. I don't think I've ever met someone that strong. She dealt with so much, pushed so hard. Of course it weighed on her, but she never let it slow her down. She carried so much on her shoulders but always moved with a light heart, always laughing and joking, inspiring everyone she met. We were supposed to go on the circus tour together, build a metal shop and start teaching people to forge and weld. She could show people how to blow fire, or to lay on a bed of nails . . . I guess things don't always go as planned. It's kind of funny, she would always talk about death; she was thinking about going to mortuary school. It makes sense too, her obsession.

She had been battling cancer for years, she had accepted the fact that she was going to die, maybe even soon, and because of that she refused to be governed by fear, she refused to let beauty slip by unnoticed; the woman had heart. I guess that's what it boils down to; being with Emma, it made me really think about death. It's not just rhetoric—one day, every one of us will be dead, one way or another. We can sit back and watch life drip away, or we can splash it on the walls, write our poetry in our blood and tears. Yes, Emma died, but she is not dead. She lives on in me, in her mother Leslie, her father Terry, and in her sister Blair and in countless other people her life has touched. Her strength is infectious, it burns in me like a fever, and, armed with the tragic beauty of her life and her passing, I greet each new day, because I know I am not alone. None of us is—we all carry with us the memories of the people who went before, those we have lost. Emma knew the price she would pay and greeted it with open arms.

And while I'm sure she had regrets, I am equally sure that if she were alive today, she would still put it all on the line for a friend, for love, for hope. Yeah, life is short. Too short. Too short not to take any risks. Thank you, Emma, for your fearsome beauty and continued support.

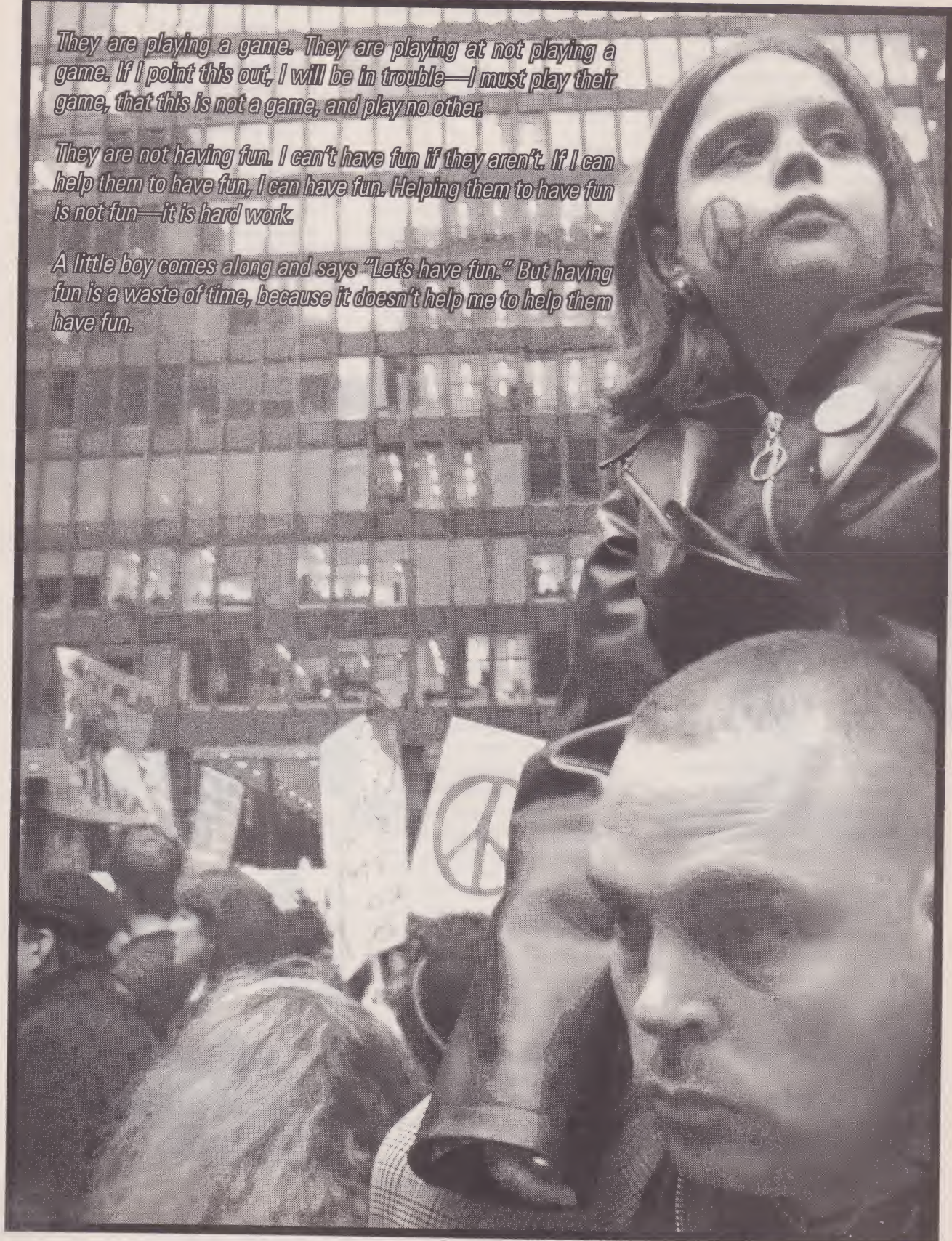
With all my heart, CB



They are playing a game. They are playing at not playing a game. If I point this out, I will be in trouble—I must play their game, that this is not a game, and play no other.

They are not having fun. I can't have fun if they aren't. If I can help them to have fun, I can have fun. Helping them to have fun is not fun—it is hard work.

A little boy comes along and says "Let's have fun." But having fun is a waste of time, because it doesn't help me to help them have fun.



We Have Worked Hard to Improve Activism—now it must be destroyed.

Do you consider yourself a specialist in revolution? Does your heart sing in your chest at the sound of words like coalition, consensus, spokescouncil, social justice, friendly amendment? Is your idea of a good time *a facilitated discussion intended to promote dialogue focusing on anti-oppression work in anti-authoritarian community organizing and movement-building for broad-based social change coming from a place of privilege*? Do you think there's always a good reason to have another meeting—or, in the words of one author, that “freedom is an endless meeting”? Brace yourself, my friend, the diagnosis is grim: it sounds like you have been infected with activism.

Whoa, Nelly! I thought activism was a good thing, was *the* good thing—I thought we were trying to create a new generation of activists, who would, issue by issue and struggle by struggle, finally fix everything! Why criticize activism itself, the knight in shining armor we're counting on to save us all?

Well, for one thing, activism today isn't something

we can all participate in. This is obvious, but the next obvious question should be whether it is setting the stage for something we can all join in, or just consolidating opposition as the private domain of experts. There's some of each going on, of course; but, sad to say, activism as we know it is something that seems to attract people who act, however unconsciously, as though they have something at stake in keeping the sphere of social change all to themselves. The typical activist takes great pride in his status as Someone Who Cares, the implication being that those who are not activists are therefore apathists, Those Who Do Not Care; in every conflict, he is “on the side of the angels”—that is to say, as the civilians who are more aware of their own imperfections realize, against all of us. That activism attracts an inordinate number of such individuals, at least during the lulls between revolutionary upheavals, should come as no surprise: except in those moments when it really seems the world is about to change, who but those most prone to fighting and judging would choose to specialize in “fighting for justice”? To quote an

“Activist”: A dreamer who has converted to “realism.”

old cynic, "the urge to save humanity is almost always a front for the desire to rule."

This is not to say that activism is entirely the province of the self-centered and self-righteous, but rather that we must be careful not to let them—and those aspects of ourselves—set the tone for our efforts. Likewise, we have to be aware of all the ways we can intimidate or estrange others—not least of all, the ways our efforts not to do so can be even more alienating.

Take the buzzwords and sentiments above: regardless of your values regarding the important questions to which they ultimately refer, they either make you feel at home ("I, too, am an activist, Saving The World!") or totally alienated, depending on whether or not you already have (or want) a place as an insider in a certain activist

culture. Think of the older homeless guy or factory worker—or, for that matter, the rebellious high school kid!—who comes to an activist spokescouncil meeting, and is impressed with the non-hierarchical atmosphere but finds the walls of jargon and procedure virtually impenetrable. Sometimes these folks do stick around, but we shouldn't flatter ourselves that they do so primarily because we've created a "safe space" with all our complicated processes—if they stick around, it's more often a tribute to their own courage and patience than to our sensitivity. We activists have tried to develop a code of behavior and language that is free of domination, an alienation-free protocol—but protocol itself is alienating, unless one is among those actively developing it. Raised as many of us were by middle managers from the middle class, we naturally tend to take it into our

Despite all our proclamations to the contrary, revolution was still a mere concept for us, a fantasy future—the social revolution, when we would put into practice at last all those abstractions about transforming life; the personal revolution, when we would finally love ourselves as we were and live life like it really was ending one minute at a time. Calling for mass actions in the name of total liberation, we still hesitated to speak to one another about our dearest dreams; defacing diet billboards, decrying patriarchal propaganda, we still put off coming to terms with our own bodies, still wondered if it wouldn't be easier just to lose that weight than somehow persuade ourselves it was beautiful. All those declarations, those fables of revolution—perhaps they were just stuff and nonsense: such concepts spring from

the psychological needs of those who trade in them at least as much as from any insight into what is desirable or possible. Looking at the concepts we created, the revolution we spoke of, it seems we needed to be in unreciprocated love with some apocalyptic event (just as many of us were, not coincidentally, with people) at least as much as we actually needed or expected one. This longing suffused everything with meaning, but it also made everything bearable—when we'd once felt, and still continued to insist, that it was all unbearable.

We had found ways of surviving, after all: we, who prided ourselves on our intransigence, who had lived through moments when it seemed the old order was truly crumbling and had pledged ourselves to defend and extend these or die trying, we too found ways to bide time and lose ourselves in routine, albeit a

hands to manage situations even in our attempts to relinquish power and privilege. Yes, it's critical that we make sure that our relationships are free of unhealthy power dynamics, as far as we're able; but when it comes to connecting our little circles to the broader social context, far better that we concentrate our energies on learning how to speak and translate other communities' languages than on developing our own perfect set of oppression-free norms, rules, and lingo.

Yet it's not just that we tend to alienate others incidentally, on account of our cultural conventions; sometimes our most deliberate actions are the most disempowering for others who would fight for control of their lives. If anything characterizes activists as a group, it is that we feel entitled to "organize," to take charge wherever resistance occurs. All too often, when people begin

breaking out of the control of the usual authorities, activists assume command: the outraged or overjoyed crowd charges into the street, blocking the intersection, and holds that territory until the activist, negotiating with the police, announces that an agreement has been reached and now it's time to disperse. Activists set the tone and language for discussions, and thus limit the pool of possible participants in such discussions. Activists attempt to rally and direct opposition in communities, and end up setting limits upon the object and scope of that opposition—sometimes disconnecting it entirely from the lives of those who were first drawn to it because it involved them directly. Activists establish themselves as the representatives of social change, and thus alienate from social change itself those who cannot see themselves reflected in these representatives. We have to get a

routine of resistance. We developed our own rituals to commemorate the ghosts of insurrections past, and slowly, famished for something tangible to live on, came to mistake these formalities for liberation itself.

Meanwhile, whether we were paying attention or not, little sparks of revolution continued to shoot through the lives of the civilians around us. Yes, revolution: the electricity would go out on a street, and neighbors who had never met would find themselves marveling at the stars together. Revolution: a child would witness, for the first time, exultant crowds filling the streets after his favorite team won a football game; and for that precious hour, as strangers embraced like fast friends and benches were torn from bus stops to feed bonfires, his world was suffused with a magic possibility that seemed as natural as it was new. Revolution: a couple

would fall deeply in love, into the kind of love that makes everything that came before seem like a mere shadow of living—and, gazing into one another's eyes one morning until the solipsism dropped away and the fact of another's thinking, feeling existence became almost palpable, would suddenly be gripped by the wild idea that in an alternate world one might look out across the rooftops and feel that grateful for everyone's existence.

To those who were not fortunate or unfortunate enough to be counted in our ranks, who felt repressed from all sides at once in a way they couldn't even begin to articulate, to whom these restraints seemed to be forces of nature—to these people, as it once had to us, revolution manifested itself above all as a shaking off of reality, a system shock, a cleansing chaos. For those who had lived their whole lives under the burdens of

sense of our own little place in the social cosmos, of the scale of what we can do without overreaching ourselves or interfering with others' autonomy.

The role of "activist" must itself be ended and transcended to attain the ends it exists to pursue. Roles and specialization (i.e. division of labor) are inherent in and necessary to the capitalist nightmare; in this scarcity-based system, those who choose one role do not usually make it more accessible or inviting to others, but less so. If our goal really is to remake a world of universal self-determination, then our primary project must always be to enable others to gain whatever capabilities we have, not to engage in any form of symptomatic treatment for the ills of capitalist society.

So what can we do? We can maintain an awareness

of the ways our own psychological motivations for activism become obstacles to its effectiveness. We can focus on exercising, sharing, and reproducing our powers, rather than consolidating them. We can focus on what we are able to do without lobbying or directing others; we might even be more effective, not less, if we concentrated on resisting honestly for ourselves rather than for everyone. We would do well to remember that while we can make revolutions in our own lives, revolution itself is not just ours. We need to be done with the sort of false modesty that enables us to act like megalomaniacs while demurring that "we're not in charge" or "our own processes of self-criticism are never concluded." The real heroes are not activists, but rather those of other backgrounds who are willing to step out of their comfort zones to work or speak with us; it's great when we do our best to smooth

toil, police, self-recrimination, it seemed the aftereffects of this repression could only be escaped by means of a transfiguring experience; perhaps one had to awaken, as the more privileged among us had been lucky enough to, under different constellations, surrounded by beautiful foreigners, to feel ready to revel, risk, revolt. But there were not enough foreign lands to accommodate all the individuals who needed this experience, nor ways to get them there: we would have to conjure them here, somehow, on domestic soil.

Pondering how to accomplish this, I began to suspect that the culture we revolutionaries had developed was not so revolutionary after all, that there might be more liberation going on during one of those power outages than there was in a hundred of our spokescouncil meetings. We had worked so hard to develop ways

of interacting freely, had refined a complex system of cultural norms and models of conduct—all this, in order to be free of the old ones! Yet our anarchist protocol could feel as alienating as any other. Perhaps what we needed most was not new mores so much as more volatile situations, seeds which could contain any number of starting points. If someone could create a situation no one could believe, it might do a lot more to create anarchy than any activism by-the-numbers. If someone could do so in an infectious way—well then! Perhaps capital-R Revolution after all!

That revolution is, in fact, taking place today—it is always taking place, though it usually has little to do with our rhetoric. It is simply the rupture point, the fault line running through every society. It is the threshold over which people pass into believing in miracles, for

the way for this, but we don't deserve the credit for it. At best, activists could be a "linking class" between diverse struggles and peoples, drawing on our personal fascination with resistance wherever it appears to help connect disparate resistances (Brazilian landless farmers to punk rockers, middle class mothers to homeless folks, abuse/addiction counselors to eco-warriors)—not to "build alliances" for its own sake (or for the sake of creating a constituency for "community organizers" to "represent"!), but in order that individuals and communities might assist one another in their immediate efforts towards liberation.

So this is not a call for the end of activism for its own sake, either, but rather so it can finally give rise to the revolution we all hoped it would in the first place. In the following fragments we'll address just a few of the aspects of our activism that could use

reworking: the predominance of white privilege in certain activist circles (and the counterproductive ways white folks address this in each other), the pitfalls of valuing theory over action (and the useless infighting this can occasion), the ridiculousness of both "lifestyle" (read as: lazy) anarchists and their equally idle critics, and the apprehensions we all have about being seen as "extreme." Have fun reading, and try not to get too defensive—this isn't intended as an attack on anyone by means of ideas, but rather as an attack on ideas for everyone's sake!

lack of a better word—and, in that state of grace, find themselves able to enact them, to change things that were immutable before. Sooner or later, they return from across that frontier, even if they arrive as "committed lifelong activists"—and all the worse, really, for a people to be burdened with a class of activists who no longer honestly believe in miracles! One must be a real romantic, a maniac who trusts in fairy tales more than reality, to remain long beyond that horizon, let alone expect the world to join her there. But that—believing in the unbelievable—is what it will take for our dreams to come true, is what makes such dreams possible at all.

So we would-be revolutionaries, if we would be revolutionaries, must find those fault lines in ourselves and trace them to the corresponding fissures in our civilization. And—more than that—we must live in such

a way that miracles are not unthinkable for us. We have everything to learn from the family that experiences an unfamiliar pleasure in responding to a sudden crisis, or the dropout who discovers that pure sailing free joy that human beings are capable of—that is our birthright and should be where the dead stares on the subwaybound daytoilers' faces are. That some yet persist from one day to the next, believing in miracles in a world that denies all magic and mystery, is itself the greatest of miracles: and proof that we can, in fact, do anything.

Here we go again:

Maybe you know the story of the young white anticapitalist who was arrested during protests against the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, summer of 2000. After being jailed, he was eventually thrown in general population at the prison, where he remained until his friends and family paid his bail. His first day in, another white guy, sporting some sketchy tattoos, approached him. "I appreciate what your movement is doing out there," the stranger began.

"Oh, you do? That's great," replied our protagonist, relieved. Was this the masses, finally coming around?

"Yeah—I appreciate it, because it's a *white* movement."

This didn't sound quite as encouraging. "I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean."

"Oh, you know what I mean."

"No, I don't," insisted the young activist, torn between outrage, fear, and confusion—he wanted to point to the anti-racist values of his community, the work they'd done to confront the inequalities of the capitalist system, but when he thought about it, all his fellow activists and protesters, all the people arrested with him, they *were* almost all white. Distraught, ashamed, and hoping to avoid conflict, he spent the rest of the day hiding out from the guy with the swastika on his chest.

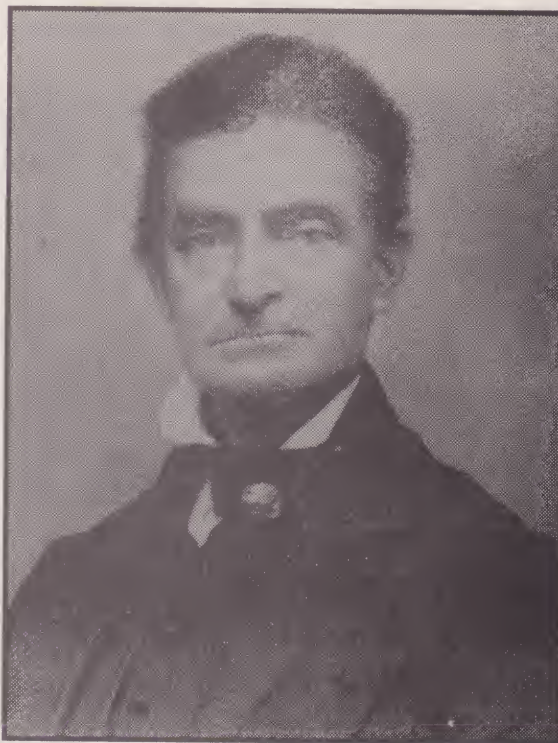
This encounter brought up a lot of difficult questions for the boy who lived it, as it still does for our community. It's no secret that, even though the subject has become more widely discussed over the past few years, white activists as a whole still have a lot of progress to make unlearning our role in the system of white supremacy. There are now some good dialogues going on about this, and one of the main reasons the subject hasn't been addressed before in *Inside Front* or other CrimethInc. materials is that we had little to add to the perspectives others were already offering. But at the same time, this issue is occasionally addressed in ways that are ultimately counter-productive—that obscure the real issues, or even alienate the people who most need to hear and listen to these critiques. Who's ready to rethink the ways white activists have been addressing the question of their own (and, more to the point, each other's) privilege? Who dares to risk saying anything about such a sensitive topic?

Yet there's no getting around it: we have to consider not only how we can unlearn our racist programming, but also how we can encourage other white folks to do so who don't necessarily place political consciousness at a premium. Currently, the dialogue about race, class, and privilege is limited to the more political fringes of the punk rock scene; elsewhere, punks go on ignoring the issues, believing them to be the private domain of the vindictive and guilt-ridden. We can blame this on the general apathy and defensiveness of the white middle class; but all the same, if we don't do our part to make a critique of white supremacy common outside our oh-so-right-on anarcho-punk ghetto, we have only ourselves to blame for it.

Is there anything we're doing in presenting these issues that is needlessly alienating? Considering that we white folks have been raised to specialize in alienating others and each other, and that even the most vehement anti-oppression activist is still infected with the lust for power this society

teaches each of us, the answer is probably yes. We don't need another generation of white activists wallowing in guilt complexes, or attempting to create them in others—we need to focus on making actual progress towards overthrowing white supremacy. Considering one's racial privilege should appear to the public as a useful way to enhance one's relations with others, not simply a pastime for neurotic masochists. In the worst-case scenarios, white activists actually use the race issue as a way to get the upper hand in power struggles with other white activists: competing to speak "on behalf" of the ones not involved in the discussion, throwing around accusations rather than helping each other improve, we only hinder the struggle against white supremacy. In light of this, I propose we step back and reconsider some of our assumptions about race, privilege, and how to address them in our community and struggle.

Let's start with the classic question: why is there so little racial diversity in the North American anarchist movement? I can only address this as an insider, being a white kid myself, but I've got some hunches about what's going on. First, I want to point out that the question itself is slanted: the more homogenous the circles the inquirer travels in, the more he will answer with an alarmist negative. There are in fact anarchists of all different ethnicities, colors, and classes active in the United States (whether they use the word "anarchist" to describe themselves or not), and the suggestion that there are not reflects as much on the speaker's narrow experience as it does on the conditions he purports to describe—asked this question, one might reply: *which* anarchist movement? Second, there are plenty of reasons people of color are hesitant to get involved in predominantly white anarchist movements. Historically, we white activists are fuckups—every time a struggle has gotten really intense or the government has really come down on some



Punk, Activism, and White Privilege

From one white punk kid from a middle class family to another

organization of color, we've been nowhere in sight (John Brown is pretty much the exception that proves the rule). Even today, most of us have made so little progress challenging our own racism and self-importance that I can only imagine how difficult it is for others to work with us; and even if that wasn't the case, it still wouldn't mean that the projects people in our community tend to take on, or the tactics with which we proceed, are necessarily relevant to folks from other communities—as I'll discuss further below. These are all points that others in our community have taken great pains to emphasize, about which others can be more eloquent than I can.

Now let's try a follow-up question that is often glossed over: given that our communities—especially the North American punk rock scene—are disproportionately white, in what ways is this a problem, and in what ways is it not necessarily one? Certainly, by keeping to mostly-white social circles, white folks miss out on a lot of the perspectives and challenges to our comfort we need—not to mention hoarding for ourselves the power our privilege gives us. On the other hand, trying to figure out how to get folks from other backgrounds to join *our* movement is self-centered, if not imperialist: who says we have the answers to everyone's problems? Who says our tactics should be everyone's tactics? To the extent that people of color didn't participate in direct action against the World Trade Organization in Seattle because white activists created an uncomfortable environment, we have a problem we have to solve; but if it is also true that great numbers of people of color didn't participate because they thought they had better things to do, we should trust their judgment. This doesn't mean that we're necessarily doing the wrong thing by protesting there—it may be good for everybody in the long run if we do—but that particular fight may be our problem, our responsibility. Before we assume that everyone who isn't there with us is just doing nothing instead, we need to educate ourselves about what they are doing in their own communities. That knowledge will prove very important.

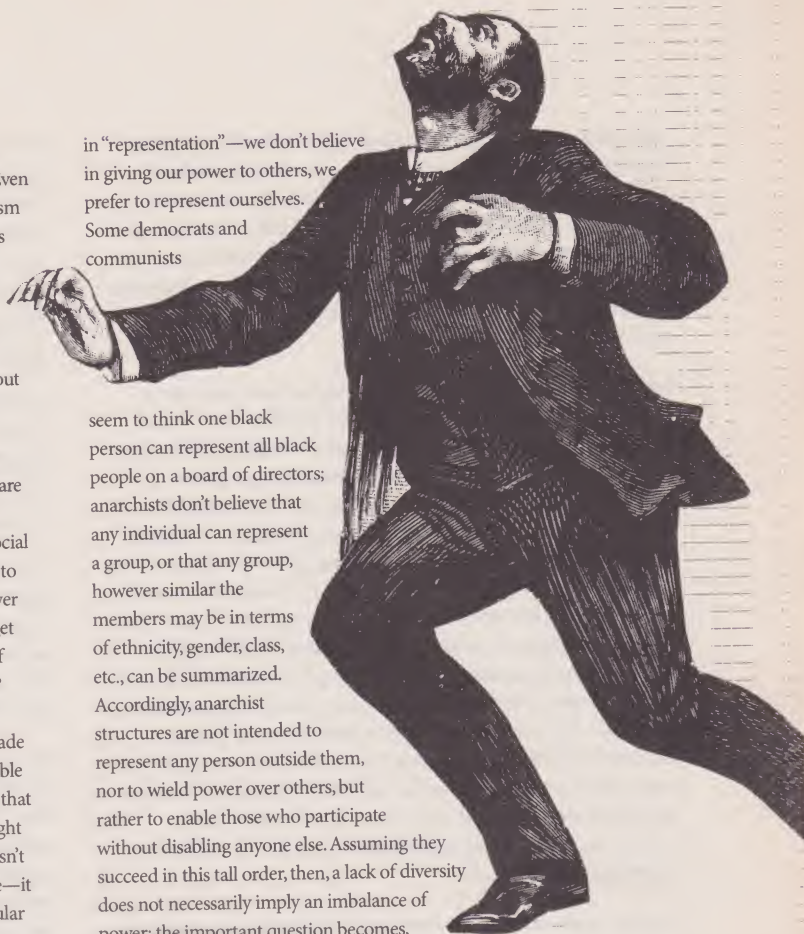
And speaking of communities, let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater—if punk rock appeals to a mostly white demographic, that's not necessarily a problem. The fact that, this being the case, punk rock will inevitably offer limited perspectives on the world and limited chances for white folks to learn to interact outside their comfort zones is an important factor to consider at all times; in view of this, punks will hopefully make an effort to look beyond the walls of their subcultural ghetto for insight and education, and take great pains not to be alienating or insensitive to those of color who are involved in punk. But the homogeneous nature of the punk scene (or, to be more specific, some punk scenes) is not necessarily an argument against its existence or value. In fact, if the punk/anarchist community was somehow transformed into a foundation upon which a reliable, predominantly-white revolutionary movement could be built that deserved trust and showed solidarity with other movements, that would be as worthwhile a purpose as any radical subculture could ever hope to serve.

Many concerns about the overwhelming whiteness of certain activist movements center on the issue of representation, which I think is something of a red herring. For democratic, socialist, and communist governing structures, which are supposed to wield the disembodied power of the community at large, representation is an important issue, perhaps the most important; but anarchists, on the whole, do not believe

in "representation"—we don't believe in giving our power to others, we prefer to represent ourselves. Some democrats and communists

seem to think one black person can represent all black people on a board of directors; anarchists don't believe that any individual can represent a group, or that any group, however similar the members may be in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, etc., can be summarized. Accordingly, anarchist structures are not intended to represent any person outside them, nor to wield power over others, but rather to enable those who participate without disabling anyone else. Assuming they succeed in this tall order, then, a lack of diversity does not necessarily imply an imbalance of power; the important question becomes, instead, whether the group is proceeding in a way that enables it to have the diversity it needs to accomplish the purposes for which it exists. For example, if a Food Not Bombs is intended to serve the needs of folks from diverse communities, it's stupid to have the cooking take place at a private house belonging to white people, where people from other backgrounds are less likely to feel comfortable; on the other hand, if you book a punk show in your basement and everyone who comes is white, that doesn't *necessarily* mean the event is consolidating power for white people at everyone else's expense—provided you're not gentrifying the neighborhood and driving your neighbors crazy, that is!

All this is *not* to say it isn't important for activists from predominantly white movements to develop relationships with people from other backgrounds. It is important, very important, and it's something that rarely happens—so I want to talk about one way white activists can foster this, since the responsibility lies on us to make this possible. Again, it's not realistic or right on to expect people of other backgrounds, with different interests, to join a project once it's already started and the goals, procedures, and tone established—especially not if the ones you're hoping to attract have been oppressed by people who look like you their whole lives. Projects that are to cut across ethnic lines have to be multiracial from the start, so they can develop with everyone involved having their interests respected and thus feeling a sense of ownership. But why would anyone of color want to start a project with white activists, anyway? If we want to work with people from other communities, we first have to build trust, establish actual friendships that common causes can be founded upon. To do so, we need to learn what revolutionary projects people of color are



undertaking that we can get behind, and support these, following their initiatives in the process rather than seeking to impose any leadership of our own. This is right on, anyway, since we white folks have a lot of resources that it would be senseless to keep to ourselves. In the process of working together, people will get to know each other, and the next project, or the one after that, can be initiated together—provided you always keep an eye out for where your privileges can be applied for everyone's benefit, and where your conditioning is interfering.

I want to add a few proposals that I hope can assist our community in making more progress with these issues. First, let's do our best to avoid framing discussions of specific cases in terms of whether a person, group, or tactic is "racist" or not—this approach immediately establishes a polarizing conflict complete with accusations, denials, all the makings of a long-term community-fracturing feud. It also provides an easy out for those not accused of racism to avoid reflecting on their own behavior: "I'm not one of the racists," they can say to themselves, "we already purged all of them." Instead, let's approach every discussion with the assumption that, as we were all raised in a racist society, we would all do well to consider constantly how we can improve our conduct and consciousness. In such a context, discussion can focus on offering practical, constructive advice and perspective, rather than bogging down in debates between people who each believe that their subjective experience is the objective truth. Forget about whether you're "a racist" or not, "objectively" speaking—if someone else subjectively feels that you are behaving in a racist or insensitive manner, you should value their perspective enough to focus on listening instead of defending yourself.

Second, let's make a distinction between activities that *utilize* privilege and actions that *abuse* or *reinforce* privilege. Simply having privilege, or doing things that those without your privileges cannot, neither of these things alone is unjust. After all, we all have privilege to some extent or another: some have white privilege, some have the privilege of an able body, etc. The problem comes when individuals take their privileges for granted, or feel entitled to more privilege than others, comfortably accepting the advantages a hierarchical, discriminatory society has accorded them at others' expense rather than challenging these inequities. But individuals possessed of privileges can take advantage of this to undermine the system that conferred them: the U.S. citizen staying in a Zapatista village so the Mexican army will not dare attack it is an example of this, the upper class dropout who spends her trust fund on rent for a community center may be another—assuming she doesn't behave as if she owns the place. If it is not the case that privilege can be applied for good, if simply having privilege in the first place is itself evidence of guilt, then the reactionary morons who characterize our politics as a race to the bottom in pursuit of the righteousness of total victimhood are correct in their analysis. Therefore, it makes little sense to criticize, for example, white shoplifters for taking advantage of the fact that security guards pay less attention to them; the real question is, can this power be used in a way that helps in the struggle against the system of domination, or does it necessarily reinforce that system no matter how it is applied? And assuming it can be used in such a way—say, by white kids stealing spices for a multi-racial Food Not Bombs—how can those white kids be persuaded to do so, rather than alienated by accusations of white privilege and guilt? From now on, we have to be very specific and very nuanced in all our considerations of the issue of privilege, not just throw the term around dismissively.

Finally, to ensure that all our discussions of this issue are more productive than vindictive, I have a suggestion: every time someone brings up white privilege in the punk/activist/anarchist community, they should give concrete, reproducible examples of approaches they have tried or at least heard about that have successfully addressed it and worked to dismantle it. This will ground discussions in the important question of how to change things, and circumvent the twin pitfalls of mudslinging and wallowing in guilt. I think that many people in our community really want to fight white supremacy in all its manifestations, but have no idea where or how to begin; the more examples we have to work from, the easier it will be for each of us to figure out how to get going. Hearing too much about problems without hearing about possible solutions can be overwhelming and immobilizing, anyway; it's always best to aim for a ratio of 50% critique to 50% proposition.

In that spirit, I'll conclude with a story from the small Southern city I sometimes call home, about an instance in which some punk rockers connected their activities to an issue affecting others outside their social stratum. I think it illustrates well the way activists can be a "linking class," making the things different social groups do anyway into effective resistance tactics simply by linking them to each other.

An innocent young black man was injured in a car accident; the police showed up before the ambulance did, and one of them shot him to death. Such a senseless murder is typical of racist police violence, but unfortunately that isn't the end of the story; when the parents of the murdered man called the police officer who killed their son a murderer, the police department sued them. Members of the activist community engaged the parents in dialogue, and they said they wanted to make a fuss about the murder and call attention to it.

This is where the punks come in. Black-clad, patch-wearing punk rockers, the kind uptight activists and liberals often deride as alienating on account of their wardrobes alone, lived in this city. They didn't have a lot of money to help with the court costs, and they didn't have ties to any voting bloc that could be called upon to pressure the local government; but they did shoplift and screenprint and spraypaint a lot. Normally, these skills were only used to affirm their subcultural values in isolation from the larger community, but soon the parents of the young man had a closet full of screenprinted shirts to sell to raise awareness and legal funding, and the walls and sidewalks of the city came alive with graffiti: *Gil Barber killed by Deputy Gordy, Deputy Gordy=Murderer*. There were demonstrations organized, and great numbers of punk rockers and their friends turned out to show support for the parents and opposition to the police. All these combined to exert force back on the police, to make their callous court case cost them public support and let them know they couldn't expect to get away with murder.

Nothing we could do could restore Gil Barber to life, or make up for this tragedy; but the case against his parents was dropped, and now our communities are connected. Gil's mother, radicalized by the injustice done her but also by her good experiences with young folks in funny outfits, is now involved in other ongoing struggles, as others are in hers. It's a humble little story, but perhaps an example of what could be possible on a much grander scale.

Just for the sake of DEBATE Argument...

"CAN THE LAW BE ENFORCED?"



G. C. CHRISTGAU

SUNDAY
JUNE 6th

8:00 O'CLOCK



PAUL KELLNER

"If you want to immobilize a person, ask him to speak more on a subject. The more he speaks, the less immediate his need to act will be."

—Bill Gates, inventor of the internet discussion forum

There are times when no distinction need be made between speaking and acting—in such situations, speaking is itself acting. And there are times when action is not yet called for, when discussion, deliberation, and planning must take place first.

There are other situations, though, in which people talk—or, more frequently, argue—instead of doing. Ideas and theories become commodities, extensions of their owners' egos, like the dogs at a dogfight; like the dogs at a dogfight, they are pitted against each other, each against all with the owners' rhetoric for claws, logic for teeth, and quick wits for reflexes. The glory of winning a debate, the gratifying knowledge that one is smarter than others, the righteousness of being right, these are exhilarating and addictive drugs—and when one has given up hope of ever effecting or experiencing real change, pursuing these consolation prizes can be a very seductive surrogate activity.

It is the nature of commodities that while they appear to increase the wealth and power of the one who possesses them, in fact they represent his dispossession—since, in capitalist society, one must give up parts of oneself (control over one's time and the products of one's labor and invention, faithfulness to one's conscience, the possibility of a life based on cooperation rather than competition) in return for the power to purchase substitutes for them. It is no different with ideas: when they become competing commodities, when there's not enough rightness and righteousness to go around and people struggle against each other to "win" arguments instead of benefiting from each other's perspectives, the ensuing competition can only maintain the dispossession of all involved by interfering with their power to find common cause or at least establish mutually beneficial relationships.

There are anarchists who "develop their theory" with the same obsessive energy others put into collecting and restoring fancy automobiles, who exhibit and defend their theses with that same fervor and combative spirit. In these contests of egos disguised as debate, whenever one wins an argument at the expense of good feeling everyone loses. It is just as important that we foster good relationships that can form a foundation for putting our ideas into practice as it is that we foster the ideas themselves. Theory serves the interests of no one as end in itself, though the personal gratification one finds in vanquishing a rival theorist can almost make one feel as though the revolution is that much closer. Theory is only one of many resources which

must be developed socially—that is, in a way that promotes respect, affinity, and trust—in order to arm individuals and groups to liberate themselves and protect each other. Anarchy isn't just a good idea in a vacuum—it is dialogue and mutual aid empowered to enforce the conditions which make them possible.

Some theorists whose bark is more frequent than their bite would defend their predilection for hostile, confrontational rhetoric and/or endless abstraction by arguing that, as the development of theory is never finished, it is folly to call for solidarity, outreach, and action in place of further discussion. But finished or not, we must constantly act on our theories, as much as we think on them—otherwise our thinking will be ill-informed, to say the least. Theory is not some retirement fund one can work to cultivate and then finally cash in—theory is thought which informs ongoing action, or else it is thought without teeth. To misquote the famous buffoon, "a theory can only describe the world—the point, however, is to live in it." Or, in the words of a more recent wiseguy, "any idea which is allowed to flow into action is a spell cast for more of the same"—what spell are we casting when we get caught up in endless debates, instead? And how are we to act with the power we can only have among friends, if our endless debates alienate us from each other?

We must once and for all discard the academic's notion that there is any real distinction between thinking and action: even the most silent actions speak volumes, and every articulation of thought is itself an action—even if it is merely a wordy opting for inaction. As actions should be evaluated according to whether they are good ideas, so articulations of theory should be evaluated according to their effectiveness as actions. The best-sounding theory is worthless if it results in no practice; the most educated debate is meaningless if it does not produce a change for the better in at least someone's life.

To make this concrete: Please, please, all you brilliant anarchist theoreticians, stop fighting amongst yourselves and figure out how to accomplish together the goals you have in common. No matter how smart you all are, your current squabbles are doing no one any good, not even yourselves.

Do you still insist that we answer your favorite question, that we declare what brand of anarchists we, which suffix we prefer to use to ghettoize ourselves? All of them, we will reply: we are anarcho-syndicalists on the shop floor, anarcho-primitivists in the forest, anarcho-communists when there's something to share, social anarchists in our communities, individualists when you catch us alone, insurrectionists when the shit hits the fan—above all, we are revolutionary anarchists, we are anarchists who believe that, as life and culture are essentially matters of context, it is up to us above all to challenge and transform this context and be prepared to start from scratch afterwards. Therefore, we don't waste much time prognosticating or constructing vast systems of protocol. We act now to change what outrages us and pursue what attracts us; we will reevaluate and act again later. We don't want to mistake our analyses for the world, nor mistake critique for liberation itself; we try not to get too comfortable with our ideological positions—they are chiefly tools with which we work towards change, not masters commanding it of us. We choose our individual strategies for enacting change based on our individual characteristics and preferences, as much as on abstract strategizing which may or may not prove accurate; we don't expect our theories and

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"In the end, our most dangerous enemies are not the subversive operatives themselves, who can be isolated and exterminated if it becomes necessary; they are, rather, those who offer constructive criticism of their efforts. Fortunately, such criticism can be buried beneath an avalanche of hostility and impertinence.

Make every discussion into a debate with two opposed sides, pro- and anti-. This distracts attention from the ideas and subjects in question; it also compels all parties to entrench themselves in rigid positions. Always [redacted] refer to your opponent's ideas as if they constitute a fixed, disembodied ideology; always address your opponent as if he is an automaton serving this ideology, not a complex being with a life history behind him. Never approach involved persons with questions; always take your criticisms directly to the public. Do not offer any strategy other than your own the benefit of the doubt. Focus on the very simplest, stupidest, weakest [redacted] material; points in any [redacted] emphasize these. Disregard subtleties. Pick a simple accusation and stick with it, repeating it over and over until everyone is so fed up that they leave the entire arena of discussion [redacted] to escape your negativity.

Make your objections simpler than your target text or tactic; it must be easier to be against it than it is to understand and interpret it. Unblushingly judge books by their covers. People should be able to take a stand with you without having to learn anything about the subject. Make it a style to dismiss as a style; make it a trend to accuse of being a trend.

Attack egos, exhaust patience, be as incoherent as possible. Make it impossible for anyone to derive anything positive from your tirades, despite their best intentions and efforts to get past your aggressive tone. When speaking of aspects of their work which make you feel alienated, for example, be as alienating as possible yourself. Defensiveness is what you want to provoke, above all-- it discredits like nothing else.

Whatever [redacted] demographics your opponent is reaching successfully, demonize. Utilize hot potato terms such as "sexist" and "classist"-- use them over and over, with as little specific reference as possible, until it is impossible to have constructive discussions about the important issues these accusations raise. Assume you can represent the views of individuals from backgrounds other than your own--especially demographics that "need" representing, as if they cannot do it themselves. Refer to bona fide representatives of these demographics, when they appear in positions you

[redacted] didn't expect, as "token."

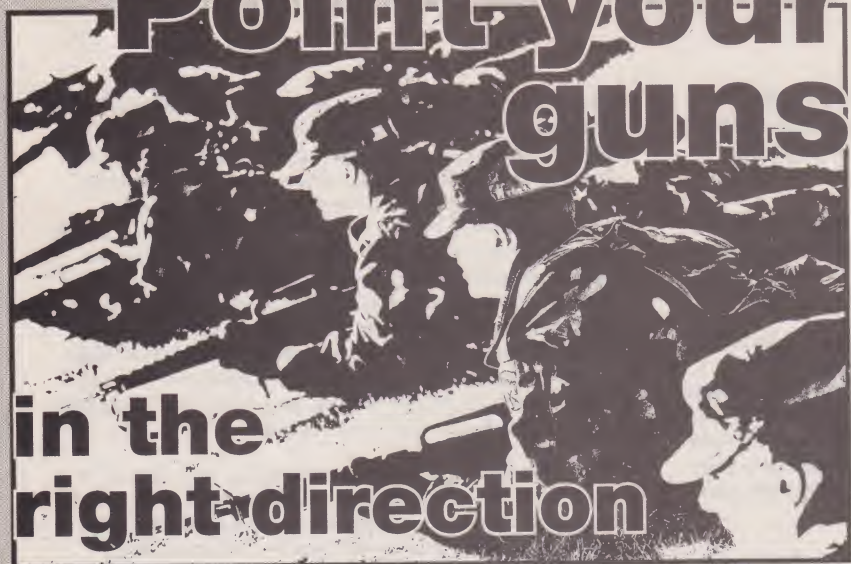
Lower the level of discussion with pointless personal attacks, sarcasm, and self-righteousness. No depth is too low to stoop. Become obsessed with your crusade; calculate your blows to hurt feelings and offend bystanders. Everyone who has grown up in this vicious world has built up a certain amount of frustration and resentment; utilize this, learn how to trigger it in others. In every discussion, [redacted] set negative energy in motion and make sure it wins out over constructive thought and respectful dialogue. Even if no one is persuaded by your arguments, this creates an environment that frightens off all outsiders.

Above all, be afraid. Be afraid of your own well-hidden doubts and vulnerabilities, and of others' reputed superiority-- and spread that fear, that shame, that guilt and resentment like a plague. Paralyze yourself and everyone else with blame for supposed imperfections. Hate yourself so much that you can only find respite in attacking others."

**REPRODUCTION
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SECRET

Point your guns in the right direction



The would-be revolutionary seeks criticism, above all—she relies upon this to refine her strategies, to learn from others' perspectives, to maintain her humility. She knows that evaluations of her efforts are of the utmost value to everyone involved in the revolutionary project, and so she is the first to insist that these efforts are far from perfect.

The most effective way to undermine her work is with *unconstructive* criticism. Harried by idle faultfinding, name-calling, petty attacks and personal vendettas, she eventually becomes deaf to all feedback—and thus frozen, neutralized.

Trust that your comrades are sincere about changing the world, and approach them with input as gently and supportively as you can. We're going to *win* this revolution, sooner or later, so there's no sense in taking out our frustrations on each other—but we're only going to win it together. Save the offensive for your true enemies—the ones with whom discussion solves nothing.

strategies to be relevant after the next big transformation—indeed, we hope they won't be. Whether our ideas are objectively "right" or not matters much less to us than whether they actually succeed in improving our lives.

And which ideology do we endorse, what brand of tactics do we extol as the One True Way? Organized federations or networks of friends, direct action or "community organizing"? These distinctions are dangerously distracting, if not outright false dichotomies. We defend the right of our comrades to organize and act however they want, and, more importantly, we won't waste everyone's time criticizing others for choosing different models than we do. We're grateful whenever others try something we wouldn't—it saves us the trouble, since every strategy for resistance must be tried, until something works! Whether some strategy is platformist or lifestyleist, individualist or pacifist or adventurist is of little concern to us, so long as it is directed at genuine liberation and carried out with a modicum of respect for those trying other strategies. We didn't get involved in revolutionary politics because we liked sectarian infighting, or sports competitions, or politics for that matter; no, we simply wanted—and still want!—to get more out of life, to make it sweeter and fairer for all.

Being anarchists, aspiring to reorganize society on a cooperative basis and so studying the ways in which people can get along and support one another, we seek not to outsell the competition—whether they be capitalists, evangelical Christians, or other anarchists—but to hone our own abilities to foster harmony and mutual aid, and offer tools for this project to whoever wants them. Solidarity, not as unquestioning unity but rather as the ability to build mutually beneficial relationships with others however different they may be from ourselves, is of the utmost importance in this undertaking. When we say "solidarity," we mean neither simple allegiance to those who agree with us nor willingness to compromise ourselves in mutually unsatisfactory unions with those whose purposes run counter to ours. No, for us solidarity is a practice, a way of approaching every situation—it is almost a verb. Deeds are worth more than any words in this struggle, and actual cooperation is worth a million theoretical treatises on it.

A Letter to the Editors of Fifth Estate

September 2002, courtesy of the C.W.C. Anti-Squabbling Squad

"Just for the sake of argument—" I've just returned from the supermarket dumpster down the street, backpack full and graffiti pen empty, to a house from which CrimethInc. propaganda is distributed.

My friends look up from the piles of pamphlets and papers and posters they've been stuffing into boxes since morning, and cringe. "You know it's not going to be good," says the one with the beard—"when someone wants to talk 'for the sake of argument.'"

"Yeah," I allow, "that could have been an alternate title for that piece in the last Harbinger, 'Infighting the Good Fight.' All the same—I've been reading this piece in the new Fifth Estate, in which one Pono Bonobo endeavors to rescue pacifist anarchism as well as CrimethInc.—whatever the term means in that context—from those indignant class war anarchists, and I've been wondering: in point of literal fact, can't one actually use the master's tools to dismantle his house?"

"Well, yes, you can," he rejoins—"but you can't use the master's tools to dismantle his tools."

"Fair enough—what are you supposed to dismantle his house with instead, I wonder?"

"We've all been trying to figure that one out," laughs the one with the pigtails, folding a poster around a book. "I guess it's OK for everyone to try different things, so long as the house ends up dismantled and the tools in the ground."

"Yeah . . ." I'm unloading perfectly good bananas and mangos, as two of them seal up a huge package to Puerto Rico. "Bonobo and this 'Ashen Ruins' person on the internet have been hashing it out over which approach, violent direct action or nonviolent stuff like naked marching, is more appealing to the masses and so on, but I don't personally see why we can't have a movement with a place for both, in which they complement each other."

"I've found both rewarding and effective, at different times," offers my pigtailed friend, as she reaches for the tape.

"Some people are going to gravitate to one, and some the other, anyway—why not accept that and focus on how to integrate the two?" Beneath the bananas are big bags of salad greens. "And that brings me to my other question: I appreciate the editor's gesture of solidarity in rebuking anarchists who attack our projects, but I'm not sure if I think it's a good thing. I mean, it feels good for my ego, but that's usually a sign that something's dangerous."

"If we're being defended on the same grounds as we're being attacked, it's not so good," suggests a fourth voice. "Contrary to some charges, I don't see us as being 'lifestylist' at all—I've never seen anything with the CrimethInc. name on it urging people to 'drop out until the system collapses.' We've published stuff about some ways people from the more privileged classes can survive without working, but I always thought the idea was to use that liberated space to wage war for everyone's liberation. Revolution has to happen, somehow, and to have time to work on it, some of us will have to get our lives out of the work economy." She goes back to answering a letter.

"What's this 'we,' white man?" jokes back at her the smiling woman at the computer, deleting the orders for free papers that have been packaged this evening.

"The way I see it," the bearded one begins again, hefting a bundle of tabloids, "the last thing we need is to be defended from our critics in the anarchist community. First off, if we're serious about focusing our energies outwards, to those who could be involved in this struggle but aren't yet"—he takes a marker and begins addressing a box to a kid in Texas—"rather than inwards, for more struggling of anarchist against anarchist, then it just perpetuates the internal conflicts for other parties to take sides. Clarifications of misunderstandings, apologies for mistakes, those things we need; more bad energy, more battles between egos, we don't. Second, I wonder if it's occurred to the people at Fifth Estate that we might not mind these attacks—maybe it's our role to say and be things that are unpopular. Maybe for some, we can be most helpful as an enemy, something to rebel or react against."

The woman looks up from the computer again, more serious. "It seems to me that we actually have a symbiotic relationship with the class war anarchists. Their diatribes can serve to bring the same things we're talking about down to earth—I've learned things from them before. And, especially if someone does misunderstand our efforts as 'lifestylist,' that critique needs to be there to clarify what our literature did not. Our tactics don't and shouldn't work for everyone, and the Class Warriors are there to provide an alternative—viciously attacking us in print is just their way to let the world know it, and responding with insults of our own wouldn't improve anything. It's not like they interfere with our activities in practice."

"Yeah, the last place *Evasion* needs to be is the Wooden Shoe bookstore," agrees the pigtailed one. "Everyone shopping there already has points of entry for other approaches to radical organizing and living."

I'm finally unloading the potatoes at the bottom of my pack: the class warriors are right, we can only hope, that we scavengers will have to find other sources of food once the revolution comes; but for the time being it's sad and absurd that they aren't here to help us share this vast bounty with hungry families around town. "If anything, I'm annoyed by the way our anarchist critics all seem to read the texts so carelessly—like in that piece on the internet: 'Flipping through their first book speaks volumes,' or the other guy who brags that all he has to do is judge our book by its cover. I'll quote that Zapatista letter to *Green Anarchy*"—I rummage through the 'zine rack and find the issue—"here it is: '*If these "critiques" had included a detailed discussion on our tactics with reference to our history and current positions in the world, it wouldn't have been a big deal, nothing that we don't do constantly within our own organizations.*' Without that, it just seems like they're looking to make enemies."

"But that's just my point," replies my bearded companion. "As long as we are getting that kind of constructive critique from some, we don't need every anarchist to read our work thoroughly, let alone praise it. We have to keep our eyes on the prize, as it were—keep focused on getting useful resources out to people not already involved in any anarchist community. That's the project we've taken on in this house, at least, right?" He gets a can of spray paint out to test a new stencil. "Anyway, that's why I wish our comrades at Fifth Estate, being well-versed in our materials and what has worked in our tactics to date, would focus on pointing out ways we can improve. We don't need defenders—or advertisers, at this point. We need insightful, creative critics."

DISPATCH FROM C.W.C.. CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Quitting your job was about having more time to do what needs doing, not just isolating yourself from the rest of humanity—wasn't it?*

**If one makes propaganda extolling what is revolutionary about shoplifting, one is not necessarily trying to get would-be revolutionaries to shoplift so they can be "more revolutionary" [obviously a stupid approach if there ever was one—although exploring the tactical benefits of shoplifting for a class of people looking to do less buying might make sense]—one might instead be trying to identify for shoplifters what is already insurrectionary in their actions, so they can broaden their analysis of their own lives.*

**Crimethought is not any ideology or value system or lifestyle, but rather a way of challenging all ideologies and value systems and lifestyles—and, for the advanced agent, a way of making all ideologies, value systems, and lifestyles challenging. It is not crimethought just to survive without a job by dumpstering, squatting, and hitchhiking; it is crimethought to realize that this lifestyle provides resources that can be used to revolutionize demonstration activism, or underground literature. It is not crimethought simply to distribute propaganda attacking the monotony and limited options of traditional employment; it is crimethought to create situations in which both workers and ex-workers benefit from each others' different experiences, and consequently discover new options and new adventures that were previously obscured.*

The Stalinists, Surrealists, Situationists, and even Southern Baptists all had their bloody purges and internal dissensions, so why can't we, too? Having no membership should be no obstacle: we can still hold exclusions from time to time, just to be sure everyone remembers. These are festive occasions for us weathered

politicos, analogous to the subtextual backbiting at the dinner parties of the bourgeoisie or the witch trials in the Salem, Massachusetts of old. But first, before we get into the fiery self-righteousness of the thing, some background.

It's been nearly a year now since I went through my entire proofing copy of the *Evasion* book in the dark back seat of a Greyhound traveling by night, with only my trendy activist headlamp for light. Even then, we knew already what the greatest drawback of publishing it in book form would be: all the general ideas in *Days of War, Nights of Love*, the inspirations and analyses and especially the rhetoric calculated to encourage revolt, would now be summed up in some minds by the specific formula spelled out by the stories in this new book. Even though *Evasion* is not a work of political theory, or a prescription of tactics, but clearly a personal account, a memoir—even though we've maintained from the beginning that there is no single strategy for insurgency, but that everyone must

ALL TRAVELER KIDS PURGED
FROM CRIMETHINC.
MEMBERSHIP

invent and reinvent their own—it was inevitable that we would be misunderstood by some, and we accepted that in publishing the book.

In publishing it, we wanted—to articulate this for the thousandth and last time—to introduce an account (one of many) of work-free living to a wider readership, and thus challenge conventional notions about the sanctity of property and the misery of material poverty. With this cultural warfare, we hoped to do our part to expand the anticapitalist movement. Sharing particular scams, extolling the lifestyle of the scam artist, these were secondary goals at best. The 'zine had already been produced and distributed on as massive a scale as the infrastructure of our d.i.y. underground allowed, to the demographics who would be most likely to utilize its scams and emulate the author's life choices; we printed the book version to see if this narrative of refusal and adventure could sow other seeds outside its native environment. Some of the feedback we've received from beyond the existing activist and anarchist communities suggests that it has; but now it's time to shake off whatever success we've achieved, as one must always do to make space for new attempts.

And to speak, for the last time as well, of how our efforts, with this book and other projects, have been misunderstood. There is a certain kind of reader who,

Nowadays, one who would think freely is in need of crimethought. But one who crimethinks is especially in need of anti-crimethought. And, to serve its purpose, crimethought must be forsaken, still more so anti-crimethought.

though you do your best to bring out the subtleties and ironies, will always focus on the most superficial, controversial terms in your works, and interpret your complex critiques as simple dismissals and endorsements ("paying=bad," "shoplifting=good"—or, far worse, "=anticapitalist"). Whether he professes to be your adversary or accomplice, it is best to avoid him altogether, for he will lower the level of dialogue on any issue to his own low denominator—and at that elevation, little of value can be discussed or achieved. Perhaps we can be blamed, in part, for creating some

of these readers, by producing material that was too simplistic or too complex; perhaps this kind of reader is simply too rampant today to be altogether avoided by even the nimblest of propagandist's pens. One certainly can't say enough, though, that nothing in the world is one-dimensional.

So while this, too, has been said a million times, perhaps it will do some good to say it again in this context: the traveler kid lifestyle is not in itself at all revolutionary. It may surprise some to hear this from us—that shows how little they've been listening all along. Shoplifting, hitchhiking, scamming, unemployment—separated from a program of life- and world-transformation, all these are merely alternative tools for survival, a survival which makes do with and ultimately accepts the status quo. Yes, it is better, however infinitesimally, to steal products than to give money to our executioners—but it's not enough! Three millennia of shoplifting now, and the exchange economy is still thriving. If it's life we're after, not mere survival, as the old dichotomy goes, we can't just sit tight now in our squats and punkhouses, eating dumpstered bagels and selling our shoplifted wares on e-bay; we have to keep on risking everything to challenge the system that denies us the rest of the world, if for nothing else at least to continue challenging ourselves.

For the record, and to briskly repudiate every imbecile who has used "CrimethInc." as a synonym for scamming and freeloading, we've never been interested in being or being seen as partisans of any lifestyle; we've always insisted that being radical involves subverting all possible lifestyle choices, all traditional strategies and identities. Revolution occurs when some part of the social equation changes: when apolitical workers initiate a wildcat strike, when middle-aged mothers start to show up in the black bloc beside their



sons and daughters, when vagabond dropouts integrate themselves into local struggles for affordable housing. The letters we receive from adult secretaries who have used CrimethInc. literature to inspire themselves to change their lives are infinitely more encouraging to me than the scores of teenagers reading *Harbinger* as they set out on the hitchhiking excursions young folks always have. Not that there is anything wrong with being a hitchhiking teenager—but to be a *dangerous* hitchhiking teenager, you must do something more than simply hitchhike, and interpreting anticapitalist texts as glorifications of your hitchhiking doesn't count.

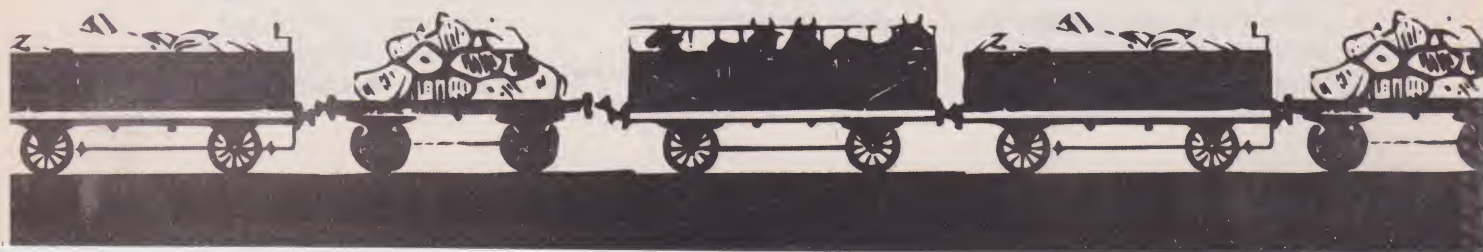
I hopped my very first train just a few weeks ago, after nearly eight straight years of unemployment and anticapitalist agitation. For most of that time, I was never much of a hitch-hiking, train-hopping, scam-pulling traveler kid, and neither were most of the individuals I collaborated with—there are, believe it or not, a wide variety of other lifestyles that are equally conducive to such endeavors. The historical intersection of the latest wave of youth nomadism with the propaganda groups like ours have been spreading is, in some ways, unfortunate; it has had some good effects, but it has also made it easier for people to dismiss some radical ideas as the alibis of a new youth trend—or, worse, to believe that they are being radical simply by joining such a trend!

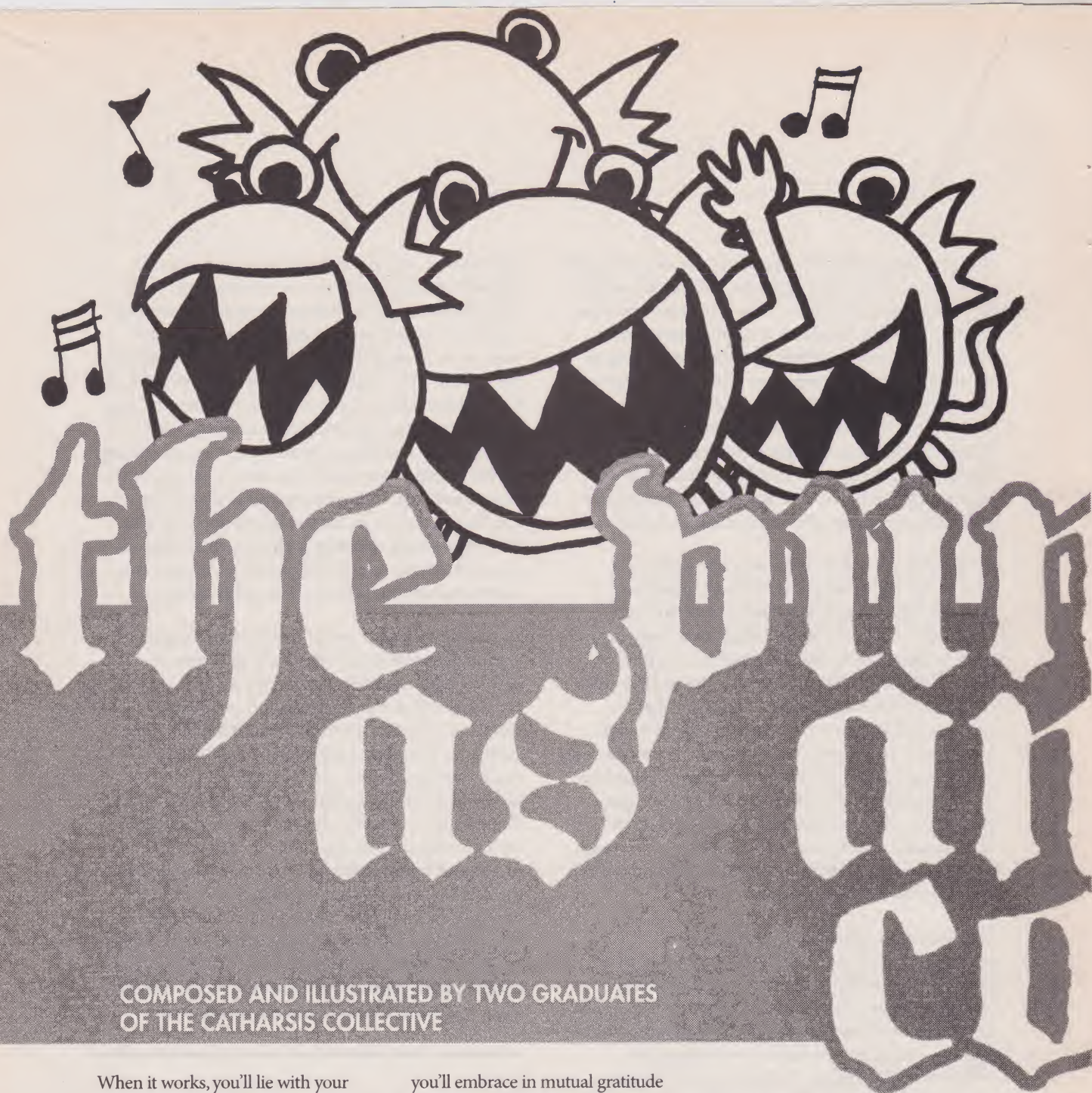
The creation of subcultural ghettos, the reinterpretation of subversive acts as promotions of some alternative lifestyle—these are processes by which opposition and subversion have been repeatedly neutralized over the past four decades, if not centuries. Yes, it is critical that we build new communities, with new cultural values and approaches, and that we not belittle these as "mere subcultures" when they do arise—for it is in these communities that we can develop and sustain a resistance, and create a context in which to lead free lives. It is also critical that we keep challenging these communities, that they do not become stagnant or self-satisfied: for as long as we are all under the great thumb, freedom is always for all or none.

CrimethInc., and for that matter (and far more important) crimethink, are not membership organizations, anyway. Subverting is not something you *are*, it's something you *do*, and must find new ways to do in every attempt. Let's not rest at expelling the traveler kids—hell, we're *all* expelled, time-tested CrimethInc. agents first and foremost! Even the most experienced of us insurrectionists must start from scratch every morning to foment insurrection, shaking off the inertia of the past to see anew what the current context calls for. When we succeed in doing this, we can change the world, for it is inertia above all that keeps the wheels spinning as they do. If we cannot, we are done for—we will be more anachronists than anarchists, and our activism mere retroactivism.

And so now we turn away from the past, from all explanations and justifications and apologies, to face the future and the experiments we have in store for it. Doubtless, they will occasion comparable storms of controversy and misconception, if we are ambitious enough to keep pushing our own limits and hazarding schemes crazy enough to work. So, all would-be crimethinkers are hereby expelled from CrimethInc.—whoever can discover the strategies for the next offensive, set the terms for the next infectious revolts and heated debates and social upheavals, let them claim it for themselves! Expect our next book, or one of them, to be a liberation manual for middle-aged mothers, not another youth's chronicle of willful indigence. In the meantime, let's *us* traveler kids stop congratulating ourselves on how free we are and start using that word, *free*, as a verb, not an adjective.

"On one point we are in unqualified agreement with our critics: it is of the utmost importance that CrimethInc. be absolutely and categorically destroyed. Unfortunately, for this to be possible, it is necessary to overthrow capitalism and Western Civilization in general. In this endeavor we wish them well, and will assist them where we can."





COMPOSED AND ILLUSTRATED BY TWO GRADUATES
OF THE CATHARSIS COLLECTIVE

When it works, you'll lie with your companions, crowded fifteen onto an apartment room floor, listening to the unbelievably loud snoring of the one who always falls asleep first, and it will be the sweetest sound you've ever heard. You'll ride into a new town each day, fearless and all-powerful in your certainty that together you will transform everything you touch. Your songs of healing and destruction will echo off the walls of trailers in Mississippi and squats in Italy, or, better, will transform your own home town into the Paris of May 1968, and

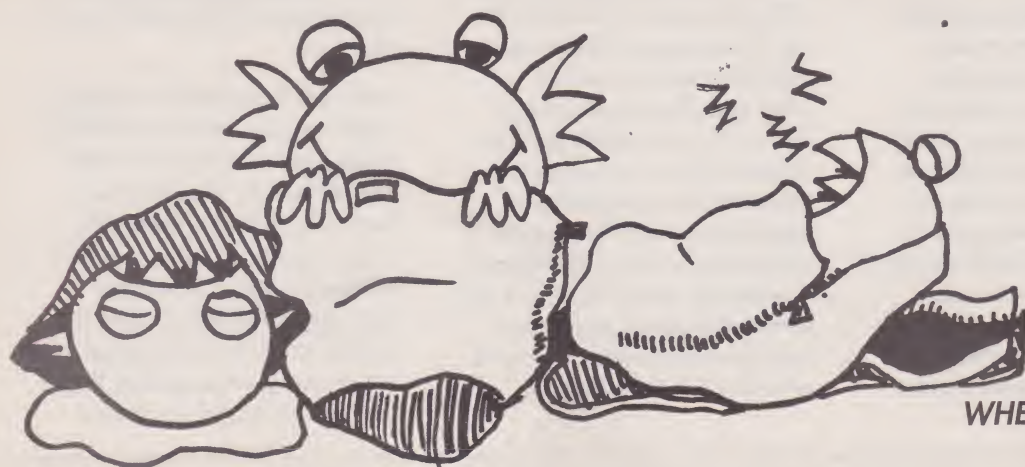
you'll embrace in mutual gratitude and wonder. All the petty disputes and anxieties that made daily life such a miserable chore will vanish, and you'll know you are living as human beings are meant to live: in tribes of shared desire, where the logic of coercion and compensation falls away and magic is wrought nightly. The world itself will tremble before the forces you unleash as you discover what you're capable of together. That's when it works.

When it doesn't work, you'll lie awake plotting revenge on your closest

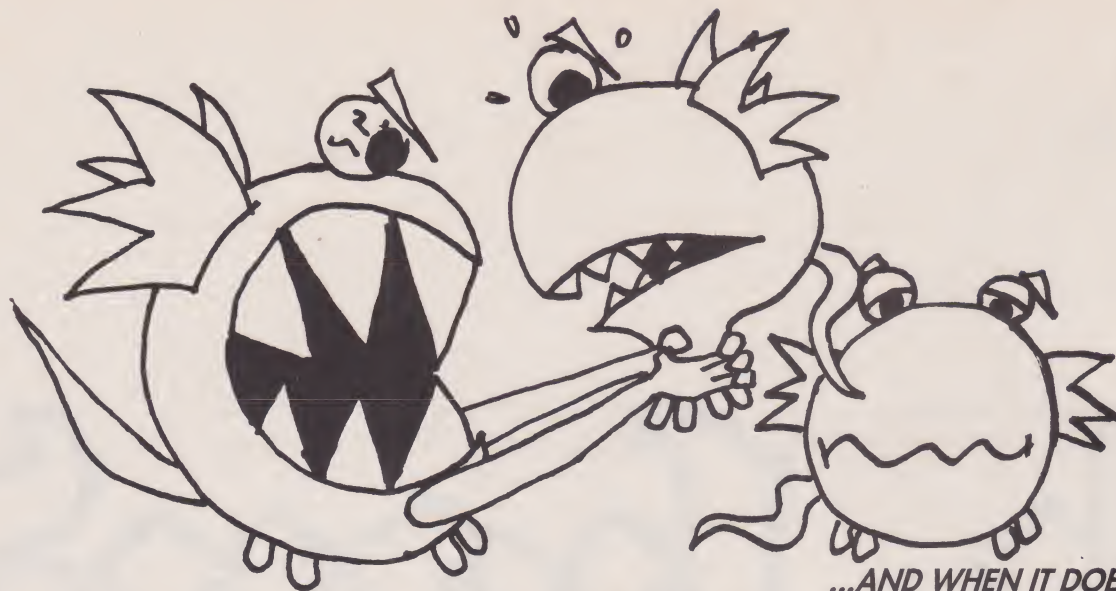
friends, you'll marvel in terror that something supposed to be fun could be so much more agonizing than day labor was, you'll even think, in the bleakest moments, you've found the proof that the anarchist revolution is a pipe dream after all.

This is about that critical foundation for world revolution through d-beats, circle pits, and patches—getting along with your friends and bandmates. Without that, nothing is possible; with it, anything is.

The band projective



WHEN IT WORKS...



...AND WHEN IT DOESN'T

It's distressing how many avowedly anarchist groups, who evangelize publicly in favor of non-hierarchical blah blah blah, are plagued by authoritarian and coercive internal dynamics. On the other hand, considering how much trouble even the best of us can have getting along with each other in relatively stress-free circumstances, it's really phenomenal how many punk bands, composed largely of emotionally disturbed young people suffering from mental illness, have all the same succeeded in working together long enough to record artistic masterpieces and even tour the globe repeatedly. Anyone who's tried either of these things knows how emotionally taxing they are—especially without any social support system or financial means to speak of.

The art of cooperating closely with a few comrades under pressure is probably the most important skill the hardcore punk milieu can foster. When they function, affinity groups such as the punk band are notoriously capable of achieving triumphs out of all proportion to their small size—and not just in the realm of rebellious music, either; additionally, they function as a scale model demonstration of how an anarchist society operates. Besides—

if we can't make three, five, and eight person collectives work, how are we supposed to succeed in overthrowing capitalism and making a world where we all get along?

So without further hoopla: some of the various strains of band pathology, and how to treat them.

Specialized Roles, Ideological Centralization, and the Provisional Dictatorship of the Singer

One pattern especially seems to recur over and over in the case of the "political band": the singer versus everybody else. Who's to blame for this?

Division of labor means that every member becomes specialized in his or her instrument—and, often, in the accompanying role associated with that instrument. Bassist jokes¹ aside, the one most deeply affected by this is usually the singer. Already likely to be outgoing and expressive by temperament, the singer finds herself/himself in the role of using words and thoughts to represent the whole band. Lyrics and accompanying song explanations are expected of her/him, interviews tend to be directed at her/him,

bandmates will count on her/him to introduce the songs while they fine-tune their instruments. All this serves to reinforce her/his inherent authoritative tendencies (let's not kid ourselves—we all have some), and soon being the spokesperson comes naturally.

The best analogy to use here is the Communist State—the singer has become The Party, whose White Man's Burden it is to educate the Masses, starting of course with the Proletariat of his own band: the other members, the ones who actually manufacture the useful product (the music, without which there could be no band). He, of course, is only giving voice to the politics they already hold unconsciously—he is the Vanguard, and this gives him the important responsibilities of managing their labor, representing their interests, issuing statements on behalf of the group, etc.

Being able to express one's feelings in words, to speak one's mind publicly, to articulate complex ideas on the spot, all these are valuable skills to have—the problem is not that the singer exercises these, but that the way the band tends to function develops them in this one person and not in the others. The singer may well be saying and organizing things that need saying and organizing,

¹ Q: What do you call that person who hangs out with the musicians in a band? A: The bassist. Q: Why did the bassist spend the night on the porch? A: He didn't know when to come in. Q: How many singers does it take to change a light bulb? A: One—he just holds it and the world revolves around him. Q: How many bassists does it take to change a light bulb? A: Who cares?

and he or she may for that matter be the one who takes the most responsibility for important matters such as the relationship between the band and other people (thanking people who lend equipment, being personable with hosts and other bands, etc.)—but this specialization is not usually sustainable, and never healthy. Tensions develop between the different class strata of the band, now that they have different interests according to their different roles. Seriously, how many bands have broken up because the dissensions between the singer and the rest of the musicians became unbearable?

In a worst case scenario, your Singer will metamorphose into a Dictator. Responsibility and responsibleness alike tend to flow in one direction once a pattern is established. The more one person does, the more

she or he knows how to do, and feels invested in these things getting done—and the less everyone else does. Worse, that person can thus become unwilling to trust others with responsibilities, just as others cease to be aware of how much work there is to be done and what it takes to do it. The Dictator blames others for not taking on responsibilities they don't even know exist; the others blame the Dictator for hostility and resentment they lack the context to understand.

It's worth clarifying here that The Singer in question may not actually be the singer, strictly speaking, of the band—it might be a guitarist, tambourine-player, even a bassist (!) playing this role. Hell, the actual vocalist of your band might be the most tight-lipped, antisocial, irresponsible person in the group. The phenomenon of The Singer

is a social affliction that tends to take root in singers but can appear elsewhere (just as even in interactions between women, it can happen that one plays The Man). An instrumental band might end up with a Singer, despite themselves—that's the danger of division of labor of any kind, even the most informal or accidental. For that matter, one member might play The Singer for some time, and then another member slide into the role.

So how do we protect ourselves against this cancer? There's the reformist approach: try to keep your Singer in check with continuous feedback, constantly apologize for the position of privilege and power you hold as Singer, etc. And then there's the radical approach—change the structure of the band unit itself: eliminate The Singer as a musical or organizational role, rotate the



THE PROVISIONAL
DICTATORSHIP OF THE
SINGER



NOT UNITY, BUT HARMONY

role from member to member, form bands in which everyone sings. Neither strategy can work without the other, really: no radical restructuring of band format could by itself undo the effects of the decades of hierarchical conditioning all of us have already undergone, and at the same time it's foolish to think people in structures that are conducive to specialization and centralization can behave differently just by deciding to.

Harmony, Not Unity

Many political punks approach band-forming with the idea that to work together, be (seen as) sincere, etc., all members of a political band must share a specific political platform, a certain lifestyle, and a strict code of conduct. And you thought the pressure to conform was bad in high school! Once again, "radical" ideologies that neglected to do away with hierarchy (such as Communism) have historically demanded such standardization from their ranks, and have ended up with consequently sterile movements, artwork, and societies; anarchist thinking, on the other hand, suggests that diversity is necessary to any healthy ecosystem or organization.

Greater diversity gives you a wider range of inspiration and ideas to draw on, and makes for better music; and since human beings are always different, even when they try to homogenize themselves, any value system that encourages conformity can only spawn dishonest and superficial relationships and projects.

A collective of would-be clones can learn to do one thing well, at best; a circle of unique individuals can do many differing things that complement each other. The best bands are the ones that engage the sum total of all that the different members have to offer, not the ones who limit themselves to what they have in common. Some of the really great moments in punk rock have come when bands that "should have" broken up over ideological and artistic differences stuck together long enough to make one more beautiful, eclectic masterpiece. Let your drummer bring in techno remixes, your bassist design matching costumes, your guitarist expound on the post-Marxist implications of improvisation, and see what happens—that Conflict record you admire for its seeming political and artistic

single-mindedness has already been recorded.

Starting from diversity is as important as fostering it. Everyone is unique, of course, and it can happen that there is more divergence of personality, skills, and experience between two people of the same background than between individuals from differing demographics—but that said, it sure can be a great thing for a band to include members of different genders, social classes, ethnicities, cultures. When people from such differing backgrounds learn to understand and respect each other's perspectives, complement each other's strengths and weaknesses, and form symbiotic relationships on the basis of their differences—that's revolution in action, even if it's just a handful at first.

Almost needless to say (in these pages, at least), bands composed of members proceeding from widely differing conditions of privilege will have to work extra hard on learning to interact as equals. Oppressive patterns—middle class people tending to take over the organizing, working class people to do the physical labor, men to

make decisions in ways that exclude women, etc.—come with us into our bands from the hierarchical world that raised us; let's make these bands social laboratories in which we learn how to break these patterns, in preparation for breaking that world.

Make Those Autonomous Zones Expandable!

Achieving supportive, non-hierarchical relations inside of your band is great, but it's not much use to the world unless it helps others do the same. Here we must address the role bands, even punk bands, play in the society of the spectacle.

Let us return to *The Singer*. Watching a band play, audience members tend to unconsciously identify themselves with the singer, the same way a spectator in a movie theater identifies with the hero on the screen, or a reader with the protagonist of a novel. This explains why so many people willingly shell out their hard-earned money for recordings of hip hop artists bragging about how much they earn from record sales—the listener identifies with the MC rather than as the victim of his money-making scheme, at least while the album is playing. This displacement of agency is at the root of the powerlessness of today's average Joe: the power to be creative is projected onto the successful novelist, the power to play sports onto the basketball star, the power to make history onto the politician.

The question for the anarchist musician is how to enable rather than disable listeners. That's tough, because what we're dealing with in the case of the punk band is a specialized, perhaps technically

proficient, group creating what is essentially a spectacle, a "show." Keeping these shows small-scale, so the performers and spectators can interact as individuals rather than only as people playing those roles, is one solution; creating performances that demand or provoke audience participation is another. Maintaining humility, and keeping your eyes on the prize of extending whatever powers you develop for yourself to everyone else, are essential. Ultimately our goal should be to make the punk community something like an extended open mic circle, in which everyone has a turn to receive attention for their creative efforts.

Finances

Capitalism plays into the division between artist and audience too, of course. A punk band trying to operate under capitalist conditions needs to have a clear analysis of the challenges they're up against, and which compromises they're willing to make, if they want to be anarchist in deed as well as word. That's why we punks have always tried to keep our record prices low and our door costs sliding-scale, and scorned the pursuit of mass popularity.

The aforementioned hip hop artists are not the only hip hop artists, of course; they're just the only ones who have time and other resources to focus on their art, since everyone else is too busy earning money to pay for food, housing, and—their records. We punks have developed an anti-consumerist, anti-rock-star ethic to ensure that a greater proportion of our numbers can engage in creative pursuits; but it's still expensive to buy, maintain, and transport conventional musical instruments, and that money has to come from somewhere.

Your band will need a collective fund to pay for this stuff. That fund will probably have to be started from a pool of your own private capital, and will hopefully come to sustain itself as you get established enough to break even. Try to resist the temptation to solve all your problems by making a lot of money off the band—remember, there's not all that much money in the punk scene, and the more of it you get, the less others have access to for their own projects and needs. You don't need to make a living off your band—you need to develop a lifestyle that enables you to play in it. Seek out other ways to meet your needs—dumpstering food, sharing living quarters, having fun playing music or writing graffiti instead of going to the movies. You'll probably need to make some money in short bursts of wage labor—medical studies, crop harvests, working and quitting, whatever—to pay for your needs and remain free to go on long tours.

It may seem crazy, voluntarily choosing poverty, perpetual uncertainty, exclusion from mainstream economic and social relations just to play music; in the bleak moments, it will feel like you've exiled yourself from the whole world for nothing. But you are investing in something that will pay off, too, something much more reliable than the material wealth of today's erratic market. You're building relationships, community, shared resources ("social capital")—the foundation for a good life no full benefits package could ensure.

Commitment

Commitment is the bedrock social capital is built on. When you give up all the false riches and reassurances of the capitalist nightmare, you'll

need this from each other more than anything else.

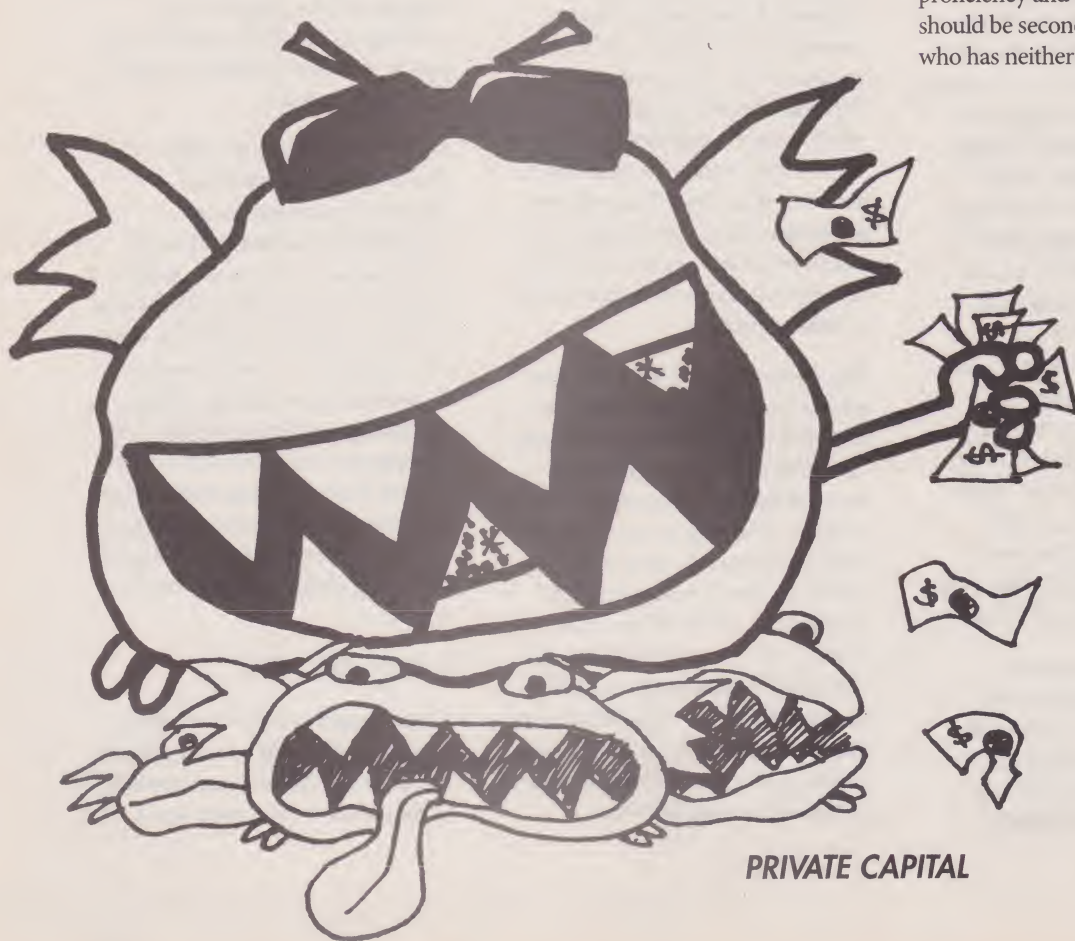
The world we live in, or rather, what world we live in, depends entirely upon our investments: we go on living in this world of sales, wages, rent, and cages because every day, everyone wakes up and—seeing no other viable option—invests their day's activities in surviving within its structures, thus perpetuating them. If you can somehow invest all your energy in creating and perpetuating another world, that world exists at least to the extent that you exist—that's the logic of living a radical lifestyle. Now, one person alone living and believing against the grain can barely survive, let alone make a real impact; but a small tribe of people who reinforce and sustain one another can thrive, and help

others open doors to new worlds of their own.

The anarchist punk rock underground, at best, is a network of such tribes, all trading support and inspiration with each other and helping plant seeds that could grow into new realities. At worst, it's just another messy, unhealthy social scene. The most critical, decisive element in the struggle between these two incarnations of punk rock is commitment. A group of people who are ready to go, ready to go through whatever, who know they will be faithful to each other and their dreams through the hardest of times, need not be perfect; as time passes, they will learn what they need to learn and improve where they need to improve.

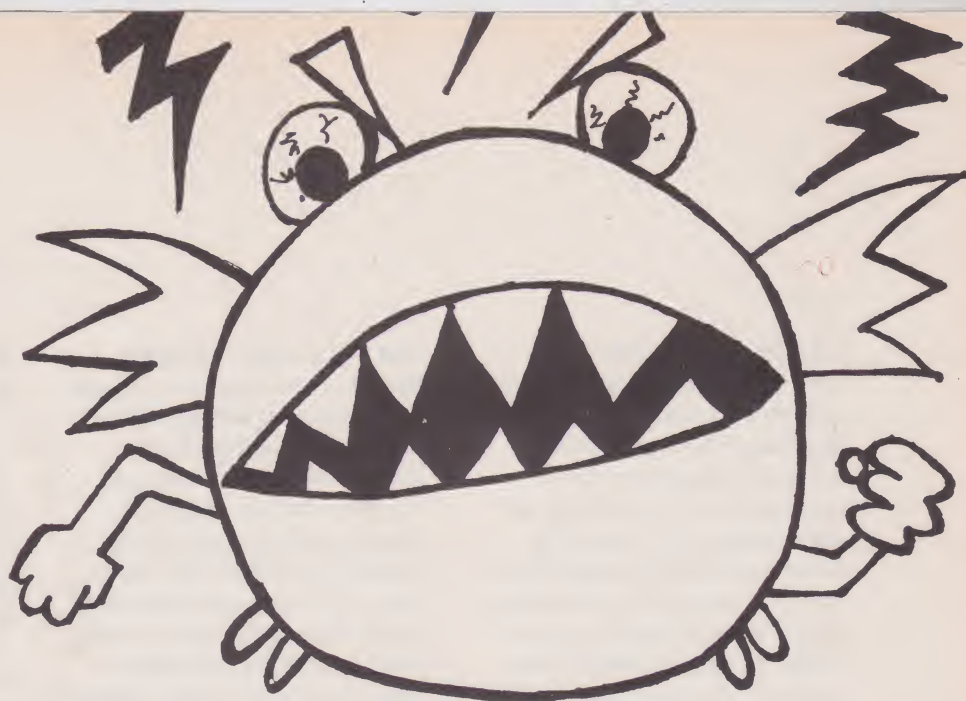
All that energy that goes into making skyscrapers, writing computer programs, and strip-mining mountains comes from us and folks like us. Even something as simple as buying groceries or gas is an act giving great power to the corporations who maintain the status quo. That same great power is ours when we invest our energy in shared projects instead of dictated routines. Even being at liberty to try this option, no matter how difficult it may be in the trying, is a rare privilege in this society—but that's all the more reason to do so, for everyone's sake, to whatever extent you're able; and playing in a punk rock band is a well-tested model for such an experiment.

When you're considering which people to form a band with, characteristics like musical proficiency and access to equipment should be secondary—a person who has neither but is possessed



by a burning desire to play can acquire these. The most important question is—are they down? Likewise, if you want to get anywhere playing punk music or working in cooperative groups of any kind, the most important characteristics you can develop in yourself are commitment, dedication, reliability, responsibility. Don't let your friends down in a tough situation. Let them know, through your actions, that they can count on you for everything you undertake together.

Three of us can share and minimize rent and food costs, make heart-breaking, riot-starting music, and tour the globe; ten of us can grow vegetables, home-repair vehicles, and set up a long-term housing project; one hundred of us can establish a permanent commune, organize city-stopping demonstrations, and fan out across the country to share those skills with ten thousand more—but it all comes down to commitment!



DON'T BE A FUCKING JERK!

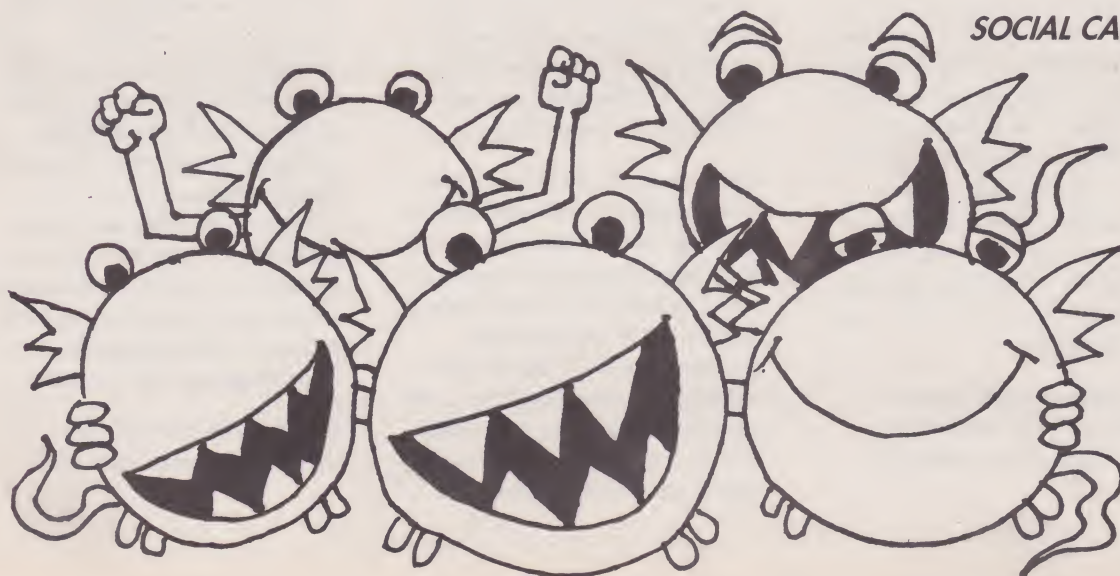
Don't Be a Fucking Jerk

I wish this didn't need saying, and you may not think it does—at least not until pursuing your visions of punk rock revolution to the ends of the earth lands you and your best friends in your first, or fiftieth, really trying catastrophe.

If you raise your voice at your bandmates, apologize explicitly as soon as you can, and try to work out the reasons you lost your head so you can avoid it next time. If one of them raises his/her voice at you and then apologizes, make it clear you accept the apology and

harbor no grudge, and ask if there is anything you could do to help avoid this happening again. If no apology is offered, approach your bandmate in a non-threatening way and make it clear how important it is you receive one. Check in with each other consistently—daily, on tour, and not just in formal meetings, in which some members may feel intimidated—about how you're communicating and making each other feel. Solicit constructive criticism, and take your companions' needs very seriously—your band depends on this.

Shouting at your bandmates is abusive, coercive behavior. Such



SOCIAL CAPITAL

behavior comes in subtler forms: sulking, sarcasm, insensitive teasing, refusing to participate in discussion, dismissing others' perspectives or needs. Forcing others to be the responsible ones (always being the one drinking, never considering others' needs until they remind you, etc.), or to patiently absorb the stress of your outbursts because you're too volatile for dialogue, these are also coercive. If you find yourself thinking it necessary to "get tough" with your

what your bandmates are going through or need support in—or even that they're going through anything at all—just by watching from a distance; you have to be someone they know they can come to for support, someone they will want to come to no matter what's going down. This is important between all people, but especially so for a small group undertaking long-lasting, high-stress projects in close quarters. Don't get too comfortable in the role

so much if the promoter isn't able to scrape up as much gas money as you'd hoped.

Translating

To repeat it once more: communication is central to collective activity, and it's a voodoo art if there ever was one. No two people speak the same language the same way—different words, gestures, actions always mean different things to different people. Don't

Punk Capital

originally printed in HeartattaCk—believe it or not!

D.I.Y. punk records should cost more

Or at least, they could cost more. And it might be a good thing. Hear me out.

Vegans and pacifists though we are, let's bite the bullet and kill the sacred cow. What if all the right-on d.i.y. punk labels—I'm NOT talking about those other profit-oriented (or even "financially realistic") labels, FUCK THEM—added fifty cents or a dollar to their record prices? What happens if we abandon the three dollar 7"??

I'm writing this because I feel like the other side of the debate about punk prices is monopolized by our enemies. Also, because whenever we compromise with the capitalist system, which we are doing from beginning to end whenever d.i.y. record are released, we need to be thinking clearly about how those compromises will get us to a better place. We need to be thinking specifically about the capital in the punk scene, and where it goes, not denying that it's going anywhere.

I'm not going to make the most-sexy argument about how "a worker should be paid a living wage for his work" that has been trotted out before as an explanation for higher record prices—those who want to rate all their activities according to a dollar value and then try to get the market to provide them with that (best of luck!) are free to. I'm not a fucking reformist. I'm not interested in trying to survive under this system but rather in overthrowing and abolishing it. This is all about tactics.

bandmates by raising your voice or acting in other ways that make them uncomfortable—or for that matter thinking that they somehow deserve this treatment for something they have done!—then make no mistake about it: you are becoming an authoritarian. Join the fucking cops, get married and raise some kids you can beat the shit out of, whatever, but get the hell out of punk rock—or get your act together.

Make yourself accessible and approachable for dialogue at all times. You may not be able to tell

of supporter, either—you need to be just as comfortable seeking support as offering it; and if you're offering support, you'd better be sure you're receiving it from somewhere too.

Lastly, above all—make sure you're doing something you really want to be doing. This will make you more accommodating and good-spirited, not to mention the fact that needing "compensation" to justify your activity, as you did when you were waiting tables or washing dishes, will now appear ridiculous. If you really love the music you're playing and the people you're with, you won't care

get angry and self-righteous about communication breakdowns—there's no "right" way to communicate, no One and Only Way to handle things; anyone who tells you different is trying, consciously or not, to impose their personal system upon the cosmos. On the other hand, some ways do work better than others—ultimately, the only thing that matters is that your group finds a common speech or method that enables you to figure things out with each other.

Something else not to forget: whenever the composition of



It's been a knee-jerk reaction of punk consumers to judge a band's or label's integrity according to their prices since I got involved in this community. This is short-sighted and superficial: sure, having low record prices makes a symbolic statement against the high prices of profit-hungry record labels, for those who witness the statement (a punk, who already hate said labels), but it also ensures that the labels (and, also, their communities) never have the capital to achieve much besides keeping the wheels of alternative production/distribution/consumption turning in their corner of the underground. Break-even prices—this is something often forgotten—mean that the label doesn't get its original investment back until months after every single record has sold—assuming they all sell—when the last distributor finally pays up—assuming they do all pay. And there are so many hidden production costs in making records—so many labels (yes, there are a lot!) forget to factor in all the unforeseeable expenses in their hurry to prove how pure and d.i.y. they are. They end up burning up all their energy as well as resources in a handful of releases or less, and giving up, while the capitalist scum on the fringes of our community continue to rake in punk money and even establish careers for themselves.

We should be thinking of who our prices benefit and how, for one thing. Flat record prices are like flat taxes: they are hardest on the poorest. If you want the prices low so the records will be more accessible to people without much money, then why not sell them on a sliding scale? The band I'm in has done some tours in hardcore communities outside the wealthier nations; we sell our records at higher prices in those richer nations so we can sell them significantly cheaper in poorer ones. Sure, some people in the former countries are poorer than some in the latter, but it's easier to give them cheaper prices or trades, too, and still break even ourselves, when the price for those who can afford it is somewhat higher than break-even.

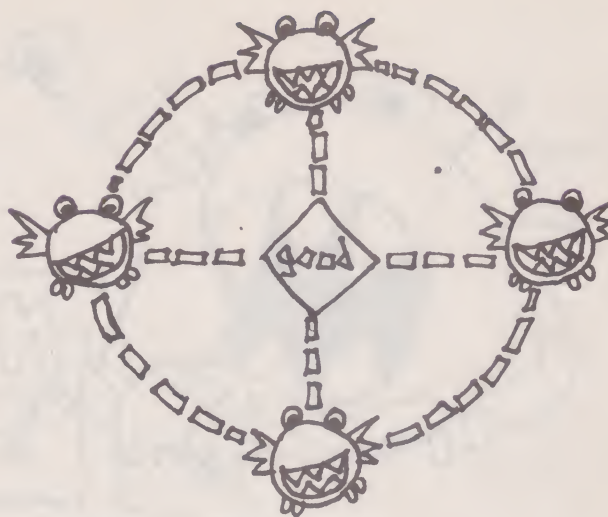
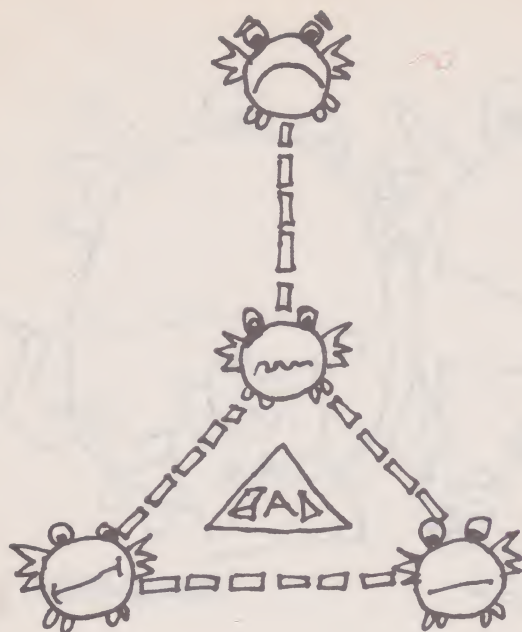
your group shifts, or even when it remains the same but the people inside it go through changes (as we all always are), you'll have to figure everything out all over again. Even the addition of a new roadie may throw off all the dynamics you had come to rely on; and when you have a new band member or two, don't assume that you can simply march forward according to the plans and procedures you'd worked out before.

Band Dynamics: A Round Table, Not a House of Representatives

Imagine the relationships in your band as a system that can be diagrammed: support and information pass between some members more than others; pair bonds are formed, tighten, loosen. All this is inevitable, and fine enough; but the general shape of the system has critical effects on the way it works for those inside it. Some bands have circular systems, in

which communication takes place between all, or, if two members are not interacting as much, they are linked to each other by everyone else; other bands develop linear systems, in which at some point in the chain of relationships there is one person who alone connects one group or individual to the rest. The circular system is healthy and durable; the linear system is risky and fragile.

Linear dynamics may not necessarily be accompanied by hierarchical power structure—but at the very least, they tend to encourage power



GOOD DYNAMICS: A CIRCLE, NOT A LINE

It's no secret—so I might as well point this out before going on—that there are some kids in our community who have access to a fair bit of money. Some of these kids have hundreds and hundreds of records they never listen to. Another dollar for them is nothing—though I guess you can always sell them t-shirts, which really are absurd luxury items, instead of raising record prices, since records are regarded by some fanatics in this community as necessities, not luxuries.

But—is affordable consumption our highest priority here, anyway? It seems to me that if higher record prices discourage consumption, that could actually be a good thing. If the d.i.y. ethic isn't just about making a kinder, gentler self-managed capitalism, a capitalism that is more consumer-friendly (and significantly harder on the producers), but rather is about revolutionizing our relationships, then let's scrap mass-consumption as a model of success. It just means making more future garbage, anyway. Are we fighting for the right of every punk to own his own extensive record collection? Shouldn't those punks be cutting down their consumption, maybe buying a collective copy of the record for their house or town to share? The buyers in the punk community tend to be the richer kids, anyway, while the poorer ones, whose needs the lower record prices are supposedly geared towards, already tend to share more.

Now let's talk about class issues as they relate to this, since the costs of commodities and the startup costs of doing business lie in closely there. Fifty cents extra for a record isn't all that much, for rich or for poor, but when record prices are kept so low by punk tradition that you practically can't release a record without being sure to lose money, that makes record-releasing significantly more difficult for working class kids than for rich ones. This is one of the oppressive conditions that keeps the classes in their places under capitalism; almost everyone can, to some degree, afford to consume, but only the rich can afford to manage production. That means—in hardcore and outside it—we always hear the voices of the wealthy, and almost never

unhealthy and disempowering: the politicians who claim to "represent" our interests in this so-called democracy inevitably fail us, for one can only learn one's own interests by representing oneself. Even if the linking member earnestly makes every effort to represent the needs of two parties to each other, he or she does a disservice to both by enabling them to avoid figuring out how to communicate directly. Additionally, the stress this representing imposes on the linking member, especially if one or both sides are being aggressive, can be extremely difficult

to bear. This stress, like all stress in a band situation, is inevitably passed back on to everyone else again—so don't try to be a hero, solving everyone's problems and carrying the whole group forward on the strength of your diplomacy.

The linear dynamic is a classic problem for bands (and entire touring groups) in which two members are involved in a love relationship, since in our society people in such relationships are encouraged to isolate themselves from others and form one unit, the

polarization. As in the case of the singer-vs.-band dynamic, the skills and needs of the people occupying the two (or more) ends of the line evolve independently of each other, and the resulting specialization of interests can lead to conflict.

Communication, which ordinarily would resolve such conflicts, is especially difficult in a band that has linear dynamics, because the one

person who links the two "wings" of the band has to represent them to each other. Representation is already recognized by anarchists as

joint interests of which are then related to the group by one of the two. Blame monogamy monoculture for this. We don't necessarily need to stop fucking and sucking our bandmates and vanmates, but when we are we need to be especially aware about keeping communication mutual and representation to a minimum. Non-monogamy, not in terms of sex so much as relationship expectations and dynamics, has a lot to teach us on this subject.

Avoiding linear band dynamics is as easy, and as hard, as solving every other internal band problem: watch out for bad patterns, keep lines of communication open, don't be a fucking jerk. Remember not to carry someone else's load when it comes to communication, any more than any other responsibility; remember also not to be so difficult to approach that others avoid you.

you won't get infuriated at the kids putting on their first basement show for not knowing how to make your vocals loud enough; have extra maps in the van in case of bad directions. Feel confident enough in your instincts to be able to say a gentle "no" to the drunk gutter-punk who creeps you out when he asks to borrow your amplifier—you don't want to have any more bad experiences than necessary, since you'll need to feel comfortable lending that amp

of anyone else. Higher record prices in the d.i.y. community might thus, believe it or not, be in the better interests of the less wealthy kids: sure, records would cost a little more when you buy them instead of trading for them or taping them, but on the other hand, if you could borrow enough money from your aunt to release one, you wouldn't have as much reason to fear being unable to pay her back.

Now, I hope you've all trusted me enough up to this point not to misunderstand and think I'm suggesting labels need to make more fucking profit on their records for their own pockets. No sir! It seems to me that, if we're trying to supercede consumer-friendly capitalism as the model of punk economics, we should sell the records for a bit more and put the extra money that will come back towards things that CAN'T fund themselves: free literature, activist projects and legal support, cooking pans for Food Not Bombs. Let's put our money where our mouths are, not keep the records cheap so the kids can buy more fancy vegan snacks after the shows! If we have to make consumer products, they should make it easier for us to accomplish our anti-capitalist projects. Otherwise we'll be treading water forever, or at least until we get burned out and sell out.

The existing precedent we have for this is benefit records and benefit shows. There's something to be said for these—at best, they provide a channel through which financial resources can go to worthy causes from a community that wouldn't otherwise be able to get its shit together to support them. At the same time, there's a difference between giving a handout to someone else trying to deal with a problem and working yourself to create a sustainable strategy for solving the problem—and I have to say the latter, in my experience, is almost always more effective. Our experience with Crimethink is central to my argument here, and if it turns out to be unrepeatable, then you can throw out my thesis, but I don't think it will: like many d.i.y. labels, we started with only a few hundred hard-earned dollars, astoundingly bad organizational skills, and a couple decent recordings.

It may well happen in a crisis situation that one member will retreat into isolation from the rest of the band, fearing or resenting all of them except perhaps the one who knows best how to communicate with him or her. This situation will not be resolved until the others can recognize his or her needs, and the individual can feel support coming from all of them. As the success of any collective project depends on everyone involved, this should always be possible, somehow—it had better be, since in the long run no shortcut or substitute will suffice.

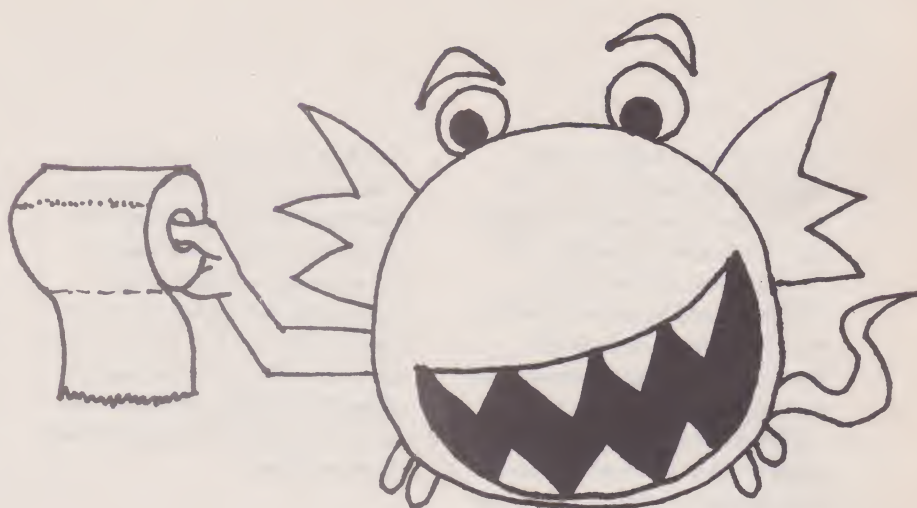
Protect Your Idealism

Part of being an anarchist is not setting yourself up to be disappointed. Your faith in other human beings, your trust that they can be responsible for themselves and each other, is more integral to what you're doing than anything else—so whenever possible, don't give people unnecessary chances to let you down. Carry toilet paper with you, so when there's none in the bathroom at the squat you won't hold the whole punk scene accountable for it; learn how to operate a P.A., so

to other bands for many years to come. Know what you need, and ask explicitly for it as far in advance as possible, but be self-sufficient and durable too. Enjoy developing these qualities in yourself, so you can consider it an exciting challenge, a final exam of sorts, when your show turns out to be in a one-outlet barn barely above freezing²—instead of feeling yourself a martyr crucified by the laziness and stupidity of an unfeeling world.

Ultimately, you should be able to thrive in any kind of environment or

cultural context (being on tour is all about learning not to need to impose your own), and to be grateful for whatever people have to offer you, no matter how humble it may be—since in the d.i.y. community, where we've done away with notions of debt and duty, everything given is given only out of generosity. Approach everything in this way, and you'll be easy for everyone else to work with—not to mention you'll have a better time yourself.



PROTECT YOUR IDEALISM

by our friends' hands. Unlike some other labels, we always had the intention to do something more than release records, and aimed for that from the beginning. We priced our records like our enemies did, the smaller but still profit-oriented hardcore labels, rather than like the d.i.y. punk labels we admired, and after a year and a half, we had enough money to print thousands of copies of the first *Harbinger*, a free radical paper. We kept investing the break-even money we got back in more projects, spent the profits on free publications and similar projects, and eventually found we were accomplishing a lot of the things we'd only fantasized about before, without having to borrow money as frequently. Admittedly, this has been easier for us because most of us are fortunate enough not to work or have financial needs, living instead through the usual tricks (contrary to popular belief, none of us have trust funds—if anyone does meet the much-spoken-of Crimethink Kid with a trust fund, could you refer me to her or him, please?), so we've been able to put in a lot of hours of work without needing money or whatever back. Still, I can't believe we're the only punk kids who can do that—I've seen hundreds of others living the same way, with a lot of energy just waiting to go into something!

I would love to see others duplicate our experience with raising money from record sales to go into political work. I believe it's important for us punks not only to support other political projects going on out there, but also establish our own sustainable foundations for projects of our own (you know, a couple of us can accomplish with \$25 what one of those Non-Governmental Organizations would need \$3000 to do). As a long-term goal, punk labels would do well to aim to take the private capital that they end up with from doing business and turn it into public capital. That is, use it to fund show spaces, community resources, projects from which everyone could benefit whether rich or poor or punk or not, from each according to her means (record sales are voluntary, you know!) to each according to her needs, that old ideal. Sure, we can keep selling the records at break-even prices and passing around the jar to collect pocket change when one of us goes to prison, but... well, how's that

When Times Get Tough...

Remember, as long as we live in this cutthroat society, troubled relationships are going to be inevitable. That's why we're fighting in this revolution! The dynamics within our groups and ourselves mirror the patterns of strife in the larger world around us, and we can't expect them to be much healthier than it is. The struggle to heal one is the struggle to heal the other, and neither struggle will be concluded until both are. The good news buried

in this conundrum is that whatever you discover that does work within your small circle may well also work to change the world at large.

It might help, when things get really bad and you start to feel ashamed of your group, like you're all a bunch of phonies and have nothing to offer the world or even each other, to consider all the other beautiful, important things that anarchists like yourself have accomplished—that great Amebix record, the resistance in the Spanish Civil War, the millions of meals served by Food Not Bombs.

You can be sure all those feats were only barely snatched from the teeth of internal dissension, resentment, and pessimism. Everything good we achieve, we achieve because we're willing to engage in projects that are imperfect—and to forgive ourselves and our relationships for that imperfection. The only thing that is perfect is nonexistence. Hold out a little to see what good you might still be able to accomplish, however flawed, before you opt for that.

Fallout and Aftermath

Sooner or later, even with the best

² At the risk of sounding like a maniac, I'll own that on the last tour we did, during which we played in a number of unheated squats in the middle of winter, I carried a thermometer with me and distracted myself on many a cold night by comparing that night's temperature reading against other nights'. Make the hard things into a game, whenever you can—don't take your sufferings too seriously.

internal dynamics anticapitalism can buy, your band is going to break up. That's inevitable, just like death (and the eventual abolition of taxes, god damn it). Things may well end in emotional drama and disappointment. Don't beat yourself up over this—learn what you can, and move on. Again, none of us are perfect, and recognizing that, being comfortable with it, is as radical and positive as our efforts to improve ourselves.

too proud to admit it's not working). Seriously, who wants to end up touring with the same songs into old age, like the Rolling Stones?

So don't get demoralized—take every lesson you learned, every skill you gained, every idea that has yet to see expression, and make that capitalist system regret it ever let you get out alive. Hope to see you in the basements—hope we'll take it to the streets.

makes it necessary for everyone to be perpetually packed into whatever indoor space is available (the van, the basement, the promoter's tiny apartment), and thus it can be hard for band members to get the space and time apart they need.

** It's best there are at least two people who identify as women in every touring group, if possible. An all-boy group will inevitably lack certain important perspectives and input, and a lone woman in a group of boys*

been working out?

I understand that. In making this proposal, I'm placing a lot of emphasis on trusting the people doing the label—and that's an Achilles' heel for this whole idea. It's true, especially since the more money anyone makes, the more they want to make it, whether it starts out being for a good cause or not. At the same time, losing money to keep consumer prices down, as I've pointed out, hasn't been helping our community progress much, either. I guess this is above all an appeal to anarchists and activists who are already considering releasing records, a suggestion of how to create a synthesis between punk and activist work that isn't often achieved. Also, as a side note—organizing labels in collectives, with discussions as to how resources should be deployed and attention paid to the wishes of the larger community, can really help to keep them on the right track.

To conclude—this is no set of rules, I'm not trying to tell you what to do. I'm just bringing up one thing that's like, so important to the whole world (I hope you're recognizing my reference here), that it seems to me could be done differently. When or if you see others trying something different, don't write them off immediately—talk to them, figure out what they're working towards. Maybe they're actually doing something more right on than the label that sells 12's for \$5!

Always saying what nobody wants to hear, [a member of] the Grimethinc Work-Shirkers' Collective

All this is to say—brace yourself, before you turn to our catalog in the back and see our new prices! Uh, just joking...

The fact that it comes to an end doesn't have to mean you were doing the wrong thing, either. It's like the objection people sometimes bring up against non-monogamous relationships—"Oh, I know some people who tried that, but they ended up breaking up." Being able to have a healthy relationship includes knowing how and when to conclude it: the conclusion is not necessarily an indication of inherent problems. Not being able to conclude, on the other hand, might be (think of the miserable monogamous marriage that drags on forever, the inmates

Send requests for band counseling, bitter denunciations of your bandmates, and videotapes of shows we played (that would be swell!) to Punk Rock Retirement Plan, c/o C.W.C.

Some final hints:

**Touring in winter [north of the equator] is much more difficult, emotionally and socially, than touring in summer—not only because of the emotional impact of the weather itself, but also because the cold*

is going to have to deal with a lot of frustration on her own. All-woman groups, on the other hand—well, our scene could use more of them!

**When a new member is going to join your band, don't make too many plans for the time after she or he is to join without her or him involved in the decision-making process.*

**Plan time apart from each other, and time together that has nothing to do with the band, into both your tours and the rest of your lives. You won't regret it!*

PEERING THROUGH THE FOG BEHIND HIS EYES, HE SAW AN ALCOHOLOGRAM: A WORLD OF ANGUISH, IN WHICH INTOXICATION WAS THE ONLY ESCAPE. HATING HIMSELF EVEN MORE THAN HE HATED THE CORPORATE KILLERS WHO HAD CREATED IT, HE STUMBLED TO HIS FEET AND HEADED BACK TO THE LIQUOR STORE.

ENSCONCED IN THEIR PENTHOUSES, THEY COUNTED THE DOLLARS POURING IN FROM MILLIONS LIKE HIM, AND CHUCKLED TO THEMSELVES AT THE EASE WITH



Editor's Preamble

Years ago, straight edge was a big, controversial issue in hardcore punk circles. Some kids, you don't like drugs. It is much, that that are not the motto, straight edge kids become all sorts of things. But we want to mix our community in more straightforward controversies—let it seem like the right time to bring up the issue again. At the time, generations of kids were coming of age, straight edge kids, some of them were the only kids who were not taking drugs, smoking weed, and we're going to make it our goal to let the world know you have somebody who's not doing drugs, straight edge kids, spread them. "Hate, kids, that's our only weapon it's our freedom to youth now this message—there's no 195, no 196, 197, 198. Nowadays, straight edge kids are all about taking away everything kids are free, open, uncontrolled space, by the front lines of drugs with our eyes and bodies, straight edge kids, uncontrolled. Last time I saw straight edge kids, they were taking shots in the windows of the Gap, not drinking in it—it's a new age, man."

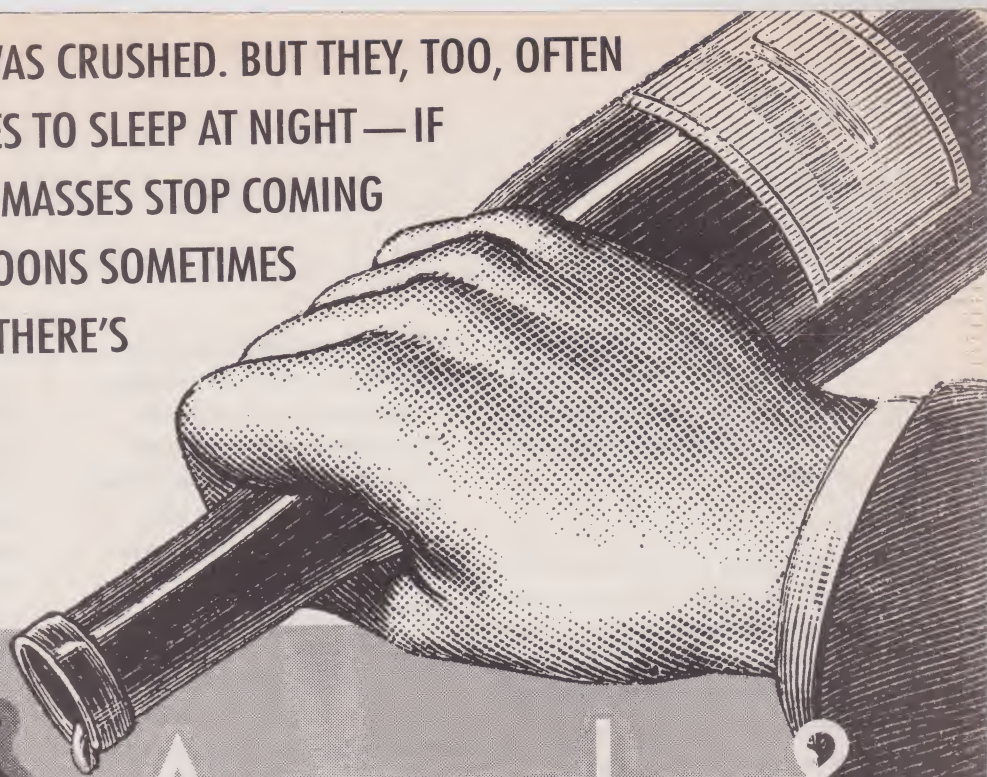
Sloshed, smashed, trashed, loaded, wrecked, wasted, blasted, plastered, tanked, fucked up, bombed. Everyone's heard of the arctic people with one hundred words for snow; we have one hundred words for drunk. We perpetuate our own culture of defeat.

Hold it right there—I can see the sneer on your face: *Are these anarchists so uptight that they would even denounce the only fun aspect of anarchism—the beer after the riots, the liquor in the pub where all that pie-in-the-sky theory is bandied about? What do they do for fun, anyway—cast aspersions on the little fun we do have? Don't we get to relax and have a good time in any part of our lives?*

Do not misunderstand us: we are not arguing against indulgence, but *for* it. Ambrose Bierce defined an ascetic as "a weak person who succumbs to the temptation of denying himself pleasure," and we concur. As Chuck Baudelaire wrote, *You must always be high. Everything depends on this.* So we are not against drunkenness, but rather against drink! Those who embrace drink as a route to drunkenness thus cheat themselves of a total life of enchantment.

Drink, like caffeine or sugar in the body, only plays a role in life that life itself can provide for otherwise. The woman who never drinks coffee does not require it in the morning when she awakens: her body produces energy and focus on its

WHICH ALL OPPOSITION WAS CRUSHED. BUT THEY, TOO, OFTEN HAD TO DRINK THEMSELVES TO SLEEP AT NIGHT — IF EVER THOSE VANQUISHED MASSES STOP COMING BACK FOR MORE, THE TYCOONS SOMETIMES FRETTERED TO THEMSELVES, THERE'S GONNA BE HELL TO PAY.



Indeed: Anarchy & Alcohol

Ecstasy vs. Intoxication: For a World of Enchantment, or Anarchaholism?
Excerpted from Guy Debord's famous work, "Insobriety and the Spectacle"

own, as thousands of generations of evolution have prepared it to do. If she drinks coffee regularly, soon her body lets the coffee take over that role, and she becomes dependent upon it. Thus does alcohol artificially provide for temporary moments of relaxation and release while impoverishing life of all that is genuinely restful and liberating.

If some sober people in this society do not seem as reckless and free as their boozier counterparts, that is a mere accident of culture, mere circumstantial evidence. Those puritans exist all the same in the world drained of all magic and genius by the alcoholism of their fellows (and the capitalism, hierarchy, misery it helps maintain)—the only difference is that they are so self-

abnegating as to refuse even the false magic, the genie of the bottle. But other "sober" folk, whose orientation to living might better be described as enchanted or ecstatic, are plentiful, if you look hard enough. For these individuals—for us—life is a constant celebration, one which needs no augmentation and from which we need no respite.

Alcohol, like Prozac and all the other mind-control medications that are making big bucks for Big Brother these days, substitutes symptomatic treatment for cure. It takes away the pain of a dull, drab existence for a few hours at best, then returns it twofold. It not only replaces positive actions which would address the root causes of our despondency—it *prevents* them,

as more energy becomes focused on achieving and recovering from the drunken state. Like the tourism of the worker, drink is a pressure valve that releases tension while maintaining the system that creates it.

In this push-button culture, we've become used to conceiving of ourselves as simple machines to be operated: add the appropriate chemical to the equation to get the desired result. In our search for health, happiness, meaning in life, we run from one panacea to the next—Viagra, vitamin C, vodka—instead of approaching our lives holistically and addressing our problems at their social and economic roots. This product-oriented mindset is the foundation of our

alienated consumer society: without consuming products, we can't live! We try to buy relaxation, community, self-confidence—now even ecstasy comes in a pill!

We want ecstasy as a way of life, not a liver-poisoning alcohol holiday from it. "Life sucks—get drunk" is the essence of the argument that enters our ears from our masters' tongues and then passes out of our own slurring mouths, perpetuating whatever incidental and unnecessary truths it may refer to—but we're not falling for it any longer! Against inebriation—and *for* drunkenness! Burn every liquor store, and replace them with playgrounds!

Spurious Rebellion

Practically every child in mainstream Western society grows up with alcohol as the forbidden fruit their parents or peers indulge in but deny to

them. This prohibition only makes drinking that much more fascinating to young people, and when they get the opportunity, most of them immediately assert their independence by doing exactly as they've been told not to: ironically, they rebel by following the example set for them. This hypocritical pattern is standard for child-rearing in this society, and works to replicate a number of destructive behaviors that otherwise would be aggressively refused by new generations. The fact that the bogus morality of many drinking parents is mirrored in the sanctimonious practice of religious groups helps to create a false dichotomy between puritanical self-denial and life-loving, free-wheeling drinkers—with "friends" like Baptist ministers, we teetotalers wonder, who needs enemies?

These partisans of Rebellious Drunkenness and advocates of Responsible Abstinence are loyal adversaries. The former need the latter to make their dismal rituals look like fun; the latter need the former to make their rigid austerity seem like common sense. An "ecstatic sobriety" which combats the dreariness of one and the bleakness of the other—false pleasure and false discretion alike—is analogous to the anarchism that confronts both the false freedom offered by capitalism and the false community offered by communism.

Alcohol and Sex in the Rape Culture

Let's lay it on the table: almost all of us are coming from a place where our sexuality is or was occupied territory. We've been raped, abused, assaulted, shamed, silenced, confused, constructed, programmed. We're

*Massive Appendix:
The Anarcho-Primitivist Case for
Straight Edge: Against His-Story,
Against Alcoholocaut!*
with apologies to Fredy Perlman and Zerzan of
the Apes

The history of civilization is the history of beer. In every area untouched by civilization, there has been no beer; conversely, virtually everywhere civilization has struck, beer has arrived with it. Civilization—that is to say, hierarchical social structures and consequent relationships of competition, unbridled technological development, and universal alienation—seems to be inextricably linked to alcohol. Our sages, who look back and ahead through time to see beyond the limits of such pernicious culture, tell a parable about our past to explain this link:

Most anthropologists regard the beginnings of agriculture as the inception of civilization. It was this first act of control over the land that brought human beings to think of themselves as distinct from nature, that forced them to become sedentary and possessive, that led to the eventual development of private

property and capitalism. But why would hunter/gatherers, whose environment already provided them with all the food they needed, lock themselves in place and give up the nomadic foraging existence they had practiced since the beginning of time for something they already had? It seems more likely—and here, there are anthropologists who agree—that the first ones to domesticate themselves did so in order to brew beer.

This drastic reorganization for the sake of intoxication must have shaken tribal structure and lifeways to the root. Where these "primitive" peoples had once lived in a relaxed and attentive relationship to the providing earth—a relationship that afforded them both personal autonomy and supportive community as well as a great deal of leisure time to spend in admiration of the enchanted world around them—they now alternated periods of slavish hard labor with periods of drunken incompetence and detachment. It's not hard to imagine that this situation hastened, if not necessitated, the rise to power of masters, overseers who saw to it that the toilsome tasks of fixed living were carried out by the frequently inebriated and incapable tribespeople. Without these chiefs and the primitive judicial systems they instituted, it must have seemed that life

itself would be impossible; and thus, under the foul auspices of alcoholism, the embryonic State was conceived.

Such a pathetic way of life could not have been appealing to the peoples who neighbored the aboriginal alcoholic agriculturists; but as every historian knows, the spread of civilization was anything but voluntary. Lacking the manners and gentleness of their former companions in the wild, these savages, in their drunken excesses and infringements, must have provoked a series of wars—wars which, sadly, the lushes were able to win, owing to the military efficiency of their autocratic armies and the steady supply of food their subjugated farmlands provided. Even these advantages would not have been enough, if the brutes hadn't had a secret weapon in their possession: alcohol itself. Adversaries who would otherwise have held their own indefinitely on the field of battle fell before the cultural onslaught of drunken debauchery and addiction, when trade—one of the inventions of the agriculturists, who also became the first misers, the first merchants—brought this poison into their midst. A pattern of conflict, addiction, defeat, and assimilation was set in motion, one which can be traced throughout history from the cradle of civilization through the Roman wars for Empire to the holocaust perpetrated upon the natives of the

badasses, and we're taking it all back, reclaiming ourselves; but for most of us, that's a slow, complex, not yet concluded process.

This doesn't mean we can't have good, safe, supportive sex right now, in the middle of that healing—but it does make having that sex a little more complicated. To be certain we're not perpetuating or helping to perpetuate negative patterns in a lover's life, we have to be able to communicate clearly and honestly before things get hot and heavy—and while they are, and after. Few forces interfere with this communication like alcohol does. In this culture of denial, we are encouraged to use it as a social lubricant to help us slip past our inhibitions; all too often, this simply means ignoring our own fears and scars, and not asking about others'. If it is dangerous, as well as beautiful, for us

to share sex with each other sober, how much more dangerous must it be to do so drunk, reckless, and incoherent?

Speaking of sex, it's worth noting the supporting role alcohol has played in patriarchal gender dynamics. For example—in how many nuclear families has alcoholism helped to maintain an unequal distribution of power and pressure? (All the writers of this tract can call to mind more than one such case among their relatives alone.) The man's drunken self-destruction, engendered as it may be by the horrors of surviving under capitalism, imposes even more of a burden on the woman, who must still somehow hold the family together—often in the face of his violence. And on the subject of dynamics...

The Tyranny of Apathy

"Every fucking anarchist project I engage in is ruined or nearly ruined by alcohol. You set up a collective living situation and everyone is too drunk or stoned to do the basic chores, let alone maintain an attitude of respect. You want to create community, but after the show everyone just goes back to their rooms and drinks themselves to death. If it's not one substance to abuse it's a motherfucking other. I understand trying to obliterate your consciousness is a natural reaction to being born in alienating capitalist hell, but I want people to see what we anarchists are doing and say "Yeah, this is better than capitalism!"... which is hard to say if you can't walk around without stepping on broken forty

New World by the murderous European colonists.

But this is just a story, speculation. Let's consult the history books (reading between the lines where we must, as these books come down to us from yesteryear's conquering killers and their obedient slaves... that is, historians!) to see if it lines up with the evidence. We'll start in the early years of agriculture, when the first tribes settled down—in the fertile lands around rivers, where wheat and barley were easy to grow and ferment in mass quantities.

The Domestication of Man—by Alcohol

Enkidu, a shaggy, unkempt, almost bestial primitive man, who ate grass and could milk wild animals, wanted to test his strength against Gilgamesh, the god-king. Gilgamesh sent a prostitute to Enkidu to learn of his strengths and weaknesses. Enkidu enjoyed a week with her during which she taught him of civilization. Enkidu knew not what bread was, nor had he learned to drink beer. She spoke unto Enkidu: "Eat the bread now, it belongs to life. Drink also beer, as it is the custom of the land." Enkidu drank seven cups of beer and his heart soared. In this condition he

washed himself and became a civilized being.

—The first written narrative of civilization, the Epic of Gilgamesh written in 3000 B.C., describes the domestication of Enkidu, the primitive, by means of beer.

The oldest authenticated records of brewing were fashioned over 6,000 years ago in Sumer, the oldest of human civilizations. Sumer also had the first known state-organized religion, and the official "divine drink" of this religion was beer brewed by priestesses of Ninkasi, the Sumerian goddess of alcohol. The hymns of Ninkasi were brewing instructions! The first collection of laws, the Code of Hammurabi of Babylon, decreed a daily beer ration in direct proportion to social status: beer consumption went hand in hand with hierarchy. For example, workers received two liters while besotted priests and kings got five. (For an interesting thought experiment, ask yourself how much alcohol you get now, and what that says about your position in society.) Historians pondering the primacy of alcohol in these ancient lawbooks have even conjectured that the original function of hierarchy was to permit some men to hoard mass amounts of alcohol while ensuring that a sufficient labor force (pacified by their meager alcohol rations to discourage

revolt or escape) was always at hand to keep farming and brewing. Kings used a golden drinking shaw to sip from the giant containers of beer that were always at hand, a tradition that has been preserved in plastic throughout the Western world. The pivotal role of alcohol in this first hierarchy is easy to recognize, even from a cursory reading of these records: as in every authoritarian regime, "justice" was a cardinal concern, and the punishment decreed for all who violated any of the laws governing beer was death by drowning.

Though it was yet newly-invented, beer influenced every single facet of emerging human civilization. Before the invention of money, beer was used as the standard item of barter... a money before money! In Ancient Egypt, a keg of beer was the only proper gift to offer to the Pharaoh when proposing marriage to his daughter, and kegs of beer were sacrificed to the gods when the Nile overflowed. As civilization spread, so did beer. Even in regions as remote as Finland, beer played a crucial role from the moment civilization struck: the Kalevala, the ancient Finnish mythic cycle, had twice as many verses devoted to beer as to the creation of the earth. Brewing could be found wherever civilization was, from the rudimentary villages of

bottles. I've never considered myself straight edge, but fuck it, I'm not taking it anymore!"

-Personal Reflection by yet another disillusioned anarchist...

It's said that when the renowned anarchist Oscar Wilde first heard the old slogan *if it is humiliating to be ruled, how much more humiliating it is to choose one's rulers*, he responded: "If it's humiliating to choose one's masters, how much more humiliating to be one's own master!" He intended this as a critique of hierarchies within the self as well as the democratic state, of course—but, sadly, his quip could be applied literally to the way some of our attempts at creating anarchist environments pan out in practice. This is especially true when they're carried out by drunk people.

In certain circles, especially the ones in which the word "anarchy" itself is more in fashion than any of its various meanings, freedom is conceived of in negative terms: "don't tell me what to do!" In practice, this often means nothing more than an assertion of the individual's right to be lazy, selfish, unaccountable for his actions or lack thereof. In such contexts, when a group agrees upon a project it often ends up being a small, responsible minority that has to do all the work to make it happen. These conscientious few often look like the autocratic ones—when, invisibly, it is the apathy and hostility of their comrades that forces them to adopt this role. Being drunk and disorderly all the time is *coercive*—it compels others to clean up after you, to think clearly when you won't, to absorb the stress generated by your behavior when you are too fucked up for dialogue. These dynamics go

two ways, of course—those who take *all* responsibility on their shoulders perpetuate a pattern in which everyone else takes none—but everyone is responsible for their own part in such patterns, and for transcending it.

Think of the power we could have if all the energy and effort in the world—or maybe even just *your* energy and effort?—that goes into drinking were put into resisting, building, creating... Try adding up all the money anarchists in your community have spent on corporate libations, and picture how much musical equipment or bail money or food (-not-bombs... or, fuck it, bombs!) it could have paid for—instead of funding their war against all of us. Better: imagine living in a world where cokehead presidents die of overdoses while radical musicians and rebels live the chaos into ripe old age!

German barbarians to the god-emperors of ancient China. Only those human beings that still lived in harmony with wild nature, such as the indigenous peoples of North America and some sectors of Africa, remained alcohol-free — for a time.

The "classical civilizations" of Greece and (of course!) Rome were as soaked in alcohol as they were in blood—the entire ancient world was lost in a collective hang-over. This must have helped the nobles and philosophers to gloss over the fact that their "enlightened democracy" was based on the subjugation of women and masses of slaves. The greatest work of "classical" literature, the Symposium, details a drinking party starring Socrates, whose claim to fame as a philosopher was enhanced by his inhumanly high tolerance for alcohol. Studying his glorifications of the abstract over the real (provided these weren't falsely attributed to him by his mendacious pupil, Plato), one can still catch a whiff of the sour breath of a drunk.

Brew and State

In life he I called Gambrinus, King of Flanders and Brabant, who first have made malt from barley and so conceived of the brewing of beer. Hence, the brewers can say they have a king as the first master brewer.

—The Patron Saint™ of beer was a monarch, of course.

The Roman Empire finally collapsed, as all empires eventually do (including this one, god damn it!), after a generations-long drunken orgy of decadence and degeneration. The two most influential survivors were beer and Christianity. Brewing had once been the domain of women—but with the rise of the Catholic Church the monastic orders seized that domain for themselves, destroying one of the last bastions of primal matriarchy. Monks, wasting away in prayer, relied upon the drink to ease their miserable religious fasting—and so, not surprisingly, the consumption of beer was not considered a violation of their vows of non-consumption. Beer consumption in monasteries reached unheard-of levels, as monks were allowed to consume up to five liters of beer a day. Both the popes and early emperors such as Charlemagne would personally supervise

the brewing process, hoping to create the perfect drink to obliterate both their consciousness and the consciousness of their subjects.

The birth of capitalism and the nation-state began with the commercialization of beer. The monasteries, overflowing with more beer than they themselves could consume, began to sell it to the surrounding villages. Monasteries doubled by night as pubs, and these men of God created some of the first well-managed profit-making enterprises.

With the weakening of the power of the Church and the rise of the modern nation-state, kings and dukes moved in to close the tax-exempt monasteries. They began licensing out brewing to the rising merchant class, imposing a heavy tax that hastened the centralization of power and wealth in these nations. Beer became the focus of every night and the mainstay of every celebration. Christmas "Yuletide," for example, derives from "Ale tide." To pacify women on their wedding night, an extra-potent "Bride Ale" was made, and so our word *bridal*. Everywhere the triumph of drunkenness, everywhere the triumph of God and State.

Sobriety and Solidarity

Like any lifestyle choice, be it vagabondage or union membership, abstention from alcohol can sometimes be mistaken as an end rather than a means.

Above all, it is critical that our own choices *not* be a pretext for us to deem ourselves superior to those who make different decisions. The only strategy for sharing good ideas that succeeds unfailingly (and that goes for hotheaded, alienating tracts like this one as well!) is the power of example—if you put “ecstatic sobriety” into action in your life *and it works*, those who sincerely want similar things will join in. Passing judgment on others for decisions that affect only themselves is absolutely noxious to any anarchist—not to mention it makes them less likely to experiment with the options you offer.

And so—the question of solidarity and community with anarchists and others who do use alcohol and drugs. We propose that these are of utmost importance. Especially in the case of those who are struggling

to free themselves of unwanted addictions, such solidarity is paramount: Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, is just one more instance of a quasi-religious organization filling a social need that should already be provided for by anarchist community self-organizing. As in every case, we anarchists must ask ourselves: do we take our positions simply to feel superior to the unwashed (er,



Have a drink, it's on me—because consumers are what makes capitalism work!

washed) masses—or because we sincerely want to propagate accessible alternatives? Besides, most of us who are not substance-addicted can thank our privileges and good fortune for this; this gives us all the more re-

sponsibility to be good allies to those who have not had such privileges or luck—on whatever terms *they* set. Let tolerance, humility, accessibility, and sensitivity be the qualities we nurture in ourselves, not self-righteousness or pride. No separatist sobriety!

Her-Story and Hop-Story

Herewith shall brewers and others not use anything other than malt, hops, and water. These same brewers also shall not add anything when serving or otherwise handling beer, upon penalty of death.

—Beer Purity and Eugenics Laws of Bayers-Landshut

While the monasteries were commercializing beer and the nation-state thriving off it, a secret sisterhood of brewers remained in the peasant villages, fermenting strange and miraculous drinks for the poor and excluded of medieval society. These “witches” would ferment juniper berries, sweet gale, blackthorn, aniseed, yarrow, rosemary, wormwood, pine roots, herbane—each with effects unique and potent. For example, while drinks based off the “vile weed” hops were sedatives, many other fermented drinks would heal the sick, calm the angry, and give hope to the hopeless. Peasants would gather in their villages and drink sacred drinks brewed with yeast their grandmothers had passed down through generations. As they consorted and consumed these wild and varied drinks, all the degradations the priests and kings had heaped upon them

would rise to their consciousness, and they would rise in revolt against their rulers. As these revolts were especially frequent and ferocious in the Holy Roman Empire, the various German nobles conspired to destroy the cultures that nourished them. The Duke of Bavaria, Wilhelm IV, passed the Beer Purity Act to quash all subversive diversity of fermentation. From 1516 onwards, beer was to be brewed only with the sedative hops; henceforth all alcohol was homogenized, and whatever medicinal or restorative fermentation technology had existed was lost. Hop-based brew causes a lack of coordination, an inability to think clearly, and eventually a slow death—all qualities needed to make both German peasants and modern temp workers incapable of revolt.

The women who had formerly been the respected brewers of the peasant villages were hunted down and burned at stake as “brew witches.” To this day, witches are rarely imagined without their brewing cauldrons. Burnings of witches on the grounds of heretical brewing processes continued until 1519. With this slaughter, the last independent and creative brewing centers were destroyed, and women prostrated before the drunken God of the repressed monks and greedy brewmasters. Through alcohol the common folk were subdued, and what passed for

life became in the Middle Ages became nasty, brutish, short, and—above all—drunk.

Globalize Alcoholism

Indeed, if it be the design of Providence to excavate these savages in order to make room for the cultivators of the earth, it seems not improbable that rum may be the appointed means. It has already annihilated all the tribes that formerly inhabited the sea coast.

—Benjamin Franklin (who was, primitivists take note, the “discoverer” of electricity among other things . . . though folk scientists will protest that he discovered electricity no more than Columbus discovered America. Perhaps “domesticator” is more accurate a term? Anyway, back to our story.)

As imperialist European civilization began its cancerous spread across the world, beer loyally led the charge. The first merchants, the Hansa, exported beer as far as India. The colonization of the United States began when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, instead of further south as planned, because they ran out of supplies: “especially our beer.” The founding fathers, including Washington and Jefferson, as well

for a lucid bacchanali

Sedated



Revolution

So anyway—what are we going to do if we don't go to bars, hang out at parties, sit on the steps or in front of the television with our forty ounce bottles? *Anything else!*

The social impact of our society's fixation on alcohol is at least as important as its mental, medical, economic, and emotional effects. Drinking standardizes our social lives, occupying some of the eight waking hours a day that aren't already colonized by work. It locates us spatially—living rooms, cocktail lounges, railroad tracks—and contextually—in ritualized, predictable behaviors—in

ways more explicit systems of control never could. Often when one of us does manage to escape the role of worker/consumer, drinking is there, stubborn holdover from our colonized leisure time, to fill up the promising space that opens. Free from these routines, we could discover other ways to spend time and energy and seek pleasure, ways that could prove dangerous to the system of alienation itself.

Drink can *incidentally* be part of positive and challenging social interactions, of course—the problem is that its central role in current socializing and socialization misrepresents it as *the* prerequisite for such intercourse. This obscures the fact that we can create such interactions at will with nothing more than our own creativity, honesty, and daring. Indeed, without these, *nothing* of value is possible—have you ever been to a bad

party?—and with them, no alcohol is necessary.

When one or two persons cease to drink, it just seems senseless, like they are ejecting themselves from the company (or at least customs) of their fellow human beings for nothing. But a *community* of such people can develop a radical culture of sober adventure and engagement, one that could eventually offer exciting opportunities for drink-free activity and merriment for all. Yesterday's geeks and loners could be the pioneers of tomorrow's new world: "lucid bacchanalism" is a new horizon, a new possibility for transgression and transformation that could provide fertile soil for revolts as yet unimaginable. Like any revolutionary lifestyle option, this one offers an immediate taste of another world while helping create a context for actions that hasten its universal realization. No war

as being slave-owning aristocrats, were all brewers of beer. Coincidence?

The foundations of colonial genocide bear the stench of a long and protracted alcohol-induced nightmare—nearly every indigenous culture the Europeans encountered was destroyed by European alcohol and disease. The spreading of "firewater" among indigenous populations of North America went hand-in-hand with the distribution of lethal smallpox-infested blankets. Many of these cultures, without the experience of thousands of years of civilized alcoholism to draw upon, were even more subject than the Europeans to the ravages of "the civilized brew." Between alcohol, disease, commerce, and guns, most of them were quickly and utterly destroyed. This process was not unique to North America—it was repeated throughout the world in every European colonial endeavor. While the drug of choice varied (sometimes it was opium, for example, as in the "Opium Wars" Great Britain waged to control China), alcohol was judged in many countries to be the most socially acceptable tool of pacification.

The Industrial Revolution was hastened by the prospect of brewing beer year-long, since the temperatures needed for

brewing occur naturally only in winter. The steam engine invented by James Watt was immediately applied by Carl von Linné to enable artificial cooling, allowing those with the infrastructure of civilization to brew anytime, anywhere. Contrary to popular belief, Louis Pasteur invented pasteurization for beer-making, and only later was it adopted by the dairy industry. Yeast, which is found naturally in the air, is no longer even used in that state by modern brewing, as scientists have isolated a single yeast cell and induced its artificial reproduction for brewing. Following the invention of the assembly line, beer has come to be mass-produced on an ever larger scale. Over the two centuries since, the alcohol industry, like all capitalist industries, has been consolidated under the control of a few major companies controlled feudally by families like the infamous Anheuser-Busch beer syndicate—infamous for its connections to right-wing groups and religious fundamentalists. As for other links between alcohol and far-right/fascist activity—perhaps the reader will recall where Hitler initiated his takeover of Germany.

Resist Capitalism—Desist Drinking

It's no exaggeration, then, to say that alcohol has played a key role in the epidemic of fascism, racism, statism, imperialism, colonialism, sexism and patriarchy, class oppression, ungoverned technological development, religious superstition, and other bad stuff that has swept the earth over the past few millennia. It continues to play that role today, as the peoples of the whole world, finally universally domesticated and enslaved by global capitalism, are kept pacified and helpless by a steady supply of spirits. These evil spirits squander the time, money, health, focus, creativity, awareness, and fellowship of all who inhabit this universally occupied territory—"work is the curse of the drinking classes," as Oscar Wilde said. It's not surprising, for example, that the primary targets of advertising for malt liquor (a toxic byproduct of the brewing process) are the inhabitants of ghettos in the United States: people who constitute a class that, if not tranquilized by addiction and incapacitated by self-destruction, would be on the front lines of the war to destroy capitalism.

Civilization—and everything noxious and baleful it engenders—will crumble when a resistance movement

a, an ecstatic sobriety!

but the class war—no cocktail but the molotov cocktail! Let us brew nothing but trouble!

Postscript: How to Read this Tract

With any luck, you've been able to discern, even through that haze of drunken stupor, ha ha, that this is as much a caricature of polemics in the anarchist tradition as a serious piece. It's worth pointing out that these polemics have often brought attention to their theses by deliberately taking an extreme position, thereby opening up the ground in between for more "moderate" positions on the subject. Hopefully you can draw useful insights of your own from your interpretations of this text, rather than taking it as gospel or anathema.

And all this is not to say there are no fools who refuse intoxication—but

can you imagine how much more insufferable they would be if they did not? The boring would still be boring, only louder about it; the self-righteous ones would continue to lambaste and harangue, while spitting and drooling on their victims! It is an almost universal characteristic of drinkers that they encourage everyone around them to drink, that—barring those hypocritical power plays between lovers or parents and children, at least—they prefer their own choices to be reflected in the choices of all. This strikes us as indicating a monumental insecurity, not unrelated to the insecurity revealed by ideologues and recruiters of every stripe from Christian to Marxist to anarchist who feel they cannot rest until everyone in the world sees that world exactly as they do. As you read, try to fight off that insecurity—and try not to read this as an expression of our own, either, but rather, in the tradition of the



Seditious

best anarchist works, as a reminder for all who choose to concern themselves that *another world is possible*.

For more preposterous treatises, or to send an angry, inebriated repartee, please contact the CrimethInc. chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous.

PREDICTABLE DISCLAIMER

As in the case of every CrimethInc. text, this one only represents the perspectives of whoever agrees with it at the time, *not* the "entire CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective" or any other abstract mass. Somebody who does important work under the CrimethInc. moniker is probably getting sloshed at the moment I'm typing this—and that's OK!

appears that can dam the flood of alcohol immobilizing the masses. The world now waits for a temperance that can defend itself, for a radical vision unclouded by drink, for a revolutionary sobriety that will return us to the ecstatic state of wild nature.

Our Anti-Authoritarian Heritage: Teetotalers Fighting Totalitarianism

It's not widely remembered that strict vegetarianism and abstinence from drink have been common in radical circles for many centuries. One need only thumb through the history books to amass a long list of heretics, utopians, reformers, revolutionaries, communarians, and individualists who adopted these lifestyle choices as essential elements of their platforms. We'll leave that list-making to the enthusiastic reader or obsessive critic—let it suffice to say that examples range from old white guys like Friedrich Nietzsche, who eschewed even caffeine while extolling the kind of ecstatic bacchanalism described herein, Vachel Lindsay, the visionary hobo of Springfield, Illinois who traversed the early United States to share his poetic appeals for temperance and willful unemployment, and Jules Bonnot and his fellow anarchist bankrobbers, who invented the getaway car together, to

Malcolm X (of course), and the E.Z.L.N.—who prohibit alcohol as per the counsel of Zapatista women fed up with men's bullshit. (The capitalist government of Mexico has tried to undermine revolutionary activity by importing beer into villages like Ocosingo; in that city and others, Zapatistas have responded by setting up barricades and fighting the soldiers who would enforce this "free trade" upon them.) One of Public Enemy's best songs attacked the role of alcohol in the exploitation and oppression of the African-American community. You can bet anarchist Leon Czolgosz was stone cold sober when he shot U.S. President William McKinley to death. Oh, and—could we forget?—there's always Ian McKay.

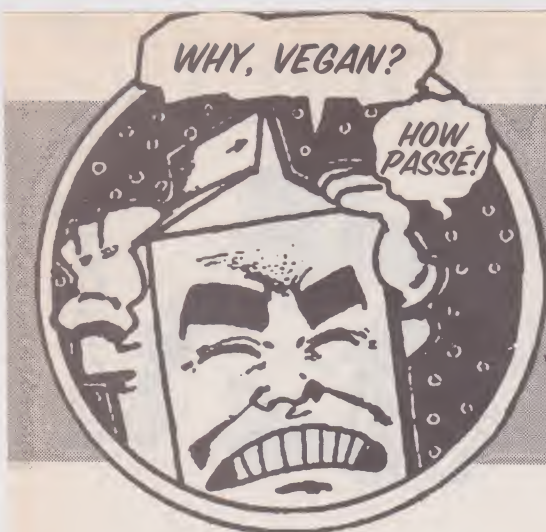
On the other side of the coin—can you imagine how much more progress we would have made in this struggle already if anti-authoritarians such as Nestor Makhno, Guy Debord, Janis Joplin, and countless anarcho-punks had focused more energy on the creation and destruction they loved so dearly, and less on drinking themselves to death?

Enough History! Let the Future Begin!

Perhaps so much talk about faraway times and peoples leaves you cold. Sure, history can be dead—and the history of

triumphant armies and mass-murderer Presidents is indeed a history of death. All the same, we can learn from this past, as from each other, if we apply our imaginations and a keen eye for pattern. Professional historians and their fellow slaves of slaves might call this account subjective or biased, but then—which of their histories isn't? We're not the ones whose salaries depend on corporate sponsorships and patronage, anyway!

Even if you do decide that this history of alcoholism is "the" truth, for heaven's sake don't waste time looking back into the past for some long-lost state of primitive sobriety that—for all any of us know—may not even have existed. What matters is what we do in the present tense, what histories our actions create today. History is the residue—no, better, the excrement—of such activity; let us not drown in it like yeast, but learn what we must and then leave it behind. Let nothing stop us, not even alcohol, as ingrained in our culture as it is! Those drunken despots and beer-bellied bigots may destroy their world and smother beneath their history, but we bear a new future in our hearts—and the power to enact it in our healthy livers.



Why we should bring back Veganism

If we can consider reclaiming straight edge as a "revolutionary lifestyle option," there's no reason to stop there—why not bid on veganism, too?

From Vegan to Freegan

In the mid-nineties, it seemed all my friends were vegan and self-righteous about it. I was hanging out in a mixture of straight edge and political punk circles, at the high point of Earth Crisis's fame, so this wasn't unusual—although, to be fair, I wasn't vegan myself, so it was probably more the case that I was defensive than it was that they were self-righteous. Whatever was going on, I remember one of the things that alienated me most about their dietary habits was the amount of money they spent on fancy vegan treats: I was already a couple years into my no-work experiment, and could barely afford rice, much less bourgeois-bohemian soy cheeseburgers—and besides, funding the non-meat "alternative" foods industry, a mere subdivision of the whole evil corporate food monster, didn't seem much more right on to me than buying from the more obvious bad guys in the same market. It seemed to me that my friends' money would end up, at best, funding some "free range" chicken farm, where the captives got an extra foot of space to pace until they were killed. I've since been proved essentially correct in my suspicions about the whole "voting with your dollars" approach to animal rights: the vegetarian/vegan trend has helped cement the iron grip of friendly-faced, evil-hearted corporations like union-busting Whole Foods over their own new niche, the bourgeois feel-good "organic" market, thus driving community co-ops and mom'n'pop

shops into even worse straits, and closing down far fewer animal-exploiting corporations than more direct-action-oriented approaches have.

Anyway, I decided my own food activism would be to stop buying from the bastards altogether. In my case, this wasn't much of a change, as I couldn't afford to in the first place; but as I started to get a sense of how much food went into the dumpsters every week, and how much money my friends were wasting on their fancy diets, it became clear to me that—fuck consuming "cruelty-free" products—those of us who could should just drop out of the economy, period. I imagine a lot of people were going through something similar to what I was, because a couple years later, the term "freegan" was in use, and people were starting to talk as much about where what they ate came from as what was in it. At first, this was still a minority position in reaction to a veganism that had claimed to address animal rights without addressing capitalism: eating dumpstered cheese pizza was a big fuck you to middle class vegans who thought their hands were clean just because they stayed out of the dairy aisle.

From Freegan to...?

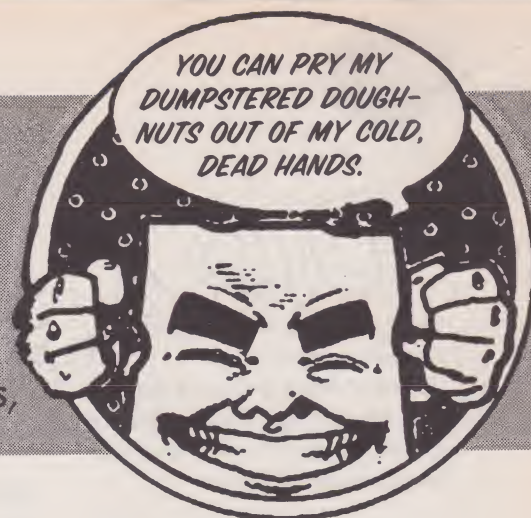
Nowadays, it's almost hard to believe that freeganism appeared as a reaction to (and a reinterpretation of) veganism—in punk circles, it seems to be much more prevalent. This, of course, may simply be my limited perspective—but whatever

strikes me as being most prevalent is the thing to react to and reinterpret, in my book! Now that freeganism has replaced veganism as default setting for punks, it's time to look at the vegan diet and figure out what might be good about it, minus the consumerism that alienated some of us from it in the first place.

First, back to my own story: for years after becoming freegan, I figured I'd just starve to death if I began limiting my choices in the already limited world of free food. I ate cheese, even meat, whatever. Eventually, I started having doubts about it, though—I noticed that I would eat meat or dairy others had paid for when I had the chance, and that was really compromising my position. I decided to find out if it really was impossible for me to be vegan as well as freegan (that is to say, to eat only food that was both vegan and free); it wasn't, and soon I was eating a strict vegan diet. In fact, it turned out that I went one direction when everyone else went the other: pretty soon all my formerly-vegan friends were freegan, while I became the last of the uptight, ingredient-reading vegans.

I hate to say this, but the next step for many of my friends has been a relapse into omnivore apathy. For a while, they only ate meat if they dumpstered it or found it dead on the road; now they're the ones buying "free range" chicken, buffalo patties, whatever. You have to travel in pretty sheltered activist circles to think you're being rebellious by doing something everyone in mainstream society does! Sure, sure, what you eat is a matter of personal choice, and one kid's diet isn't going

...to feel compassion living in earshot of the sweatshops, the stadiums, the slaughterhouses, with the scent of blood cheap in the air...



to make or break an industry; but aside from the question of economic complicity, aside from the excuse to be self-righteous, even aside from the health issue, there is a little-discussed reason for strict veganism that has turned out to be really important to me.

Desire as Medium

For me, the most important thing about veganism is that it provides a concrete example of how we can transform our own habits and desires, how we can revolutionize ourselves. I figure we need to practice personally what we want to do on a global scale, if we are to have the knowledge and momentum to do it one day.

As the old sage once said, *in a world turned upside down, the true is a moment of the false*. Another way one could put this today: *in a life of suffering, pleasure is a component in a system of pain*. Here's an example, lest the philosophizing get too murky: a man comes home from the job he hates, exhausted, and turns on the television to unwind. Watching television is actually a fundamental part of his dispossession, but he experiences it as a pleasure, a reprieve. Here's another example of the same thing: *mmm, hamburger*.

In a world in which our own desires are turned against us as agents of our own oppression and the oppression of those around us, real indulgence, true hedonism, must therefore be a *contesting* of our desires, as well as a fulfilling of them. To experience joy and pleasure, not as a momentary reprieve from a miserable life, but

as a total, gratifying *way of life*, we must subvert our own habits and tastes, we must challenge and reconstruct ourselves outside the template of our programming.

One of the best examples of this in action is veganism. I'm not talking about those vegans who go around complaining about how much they miss yogurt—that shit drives me crazy: if your politics are about self-denial, you need to reconsider your whole approach. No, I'm talking about the transformation that takes place in a person who has not eaten meat for a year or so, who slowly stops looking at meat as being food at all. Remember, the omnipresence of flesh isn't just about sales and profit; it's also about desensitizing us to slaughter, getting us to look at our fellow living things as commodities. The fact that I can pass a McDonald's now and see the corpses of tortured animals rather than a selection of tasty lunchtime delights is, for me, a little victory. It means I've brought my desires a little further back into connection with reality (as I perceive and construct it), and it suggests that, given enough time outside—to choose another example—patriarchy, I might also be able to unlearn the objectifying that was programmed into my sexuality, or the striving for domination programmed into my social behavior.

One friend of mine once chided me for making even dinner into a symbol, but that's backwards: those hamburgers are, in fact, the dead bodies of cows raised in factory farms—it's capitalism that presents them as "symbols," as products with exchange values rather than

individual lives. I think that if we are to pursue happiness with some chance of success, we all have to be in touch with ourselves, not blocking any of our emotional responses. Doing what it takes to feel the tragedy of the factory farm holocaust whenever you pass a butcher shop is simply part of seeking to be a complete person, to be sensitive enough that you can experience joy fully, too, when you have the chance.

Perhaps one day, when animal-exploiting, environmentally destructive techno-industrial society has collapsed, I'll hunt deer in the woods, respectfully killing and eating my fellow creatures as my ancestors once did. In the meantime, I'm on strike. They can't sell me their products—I can get my hands on what I need for free—and neither can those products brainwash me into accepting genocide and exploitation as a part of everyday life. Every time I turn down some corporate animal product, however it reaches my low place in the food chain, it feels better to say FUCK YOU to our enemies and their war on us all than it ever could to eat steak or drink milkshakes.

So, erstwhile freegan, if any of this stuff about liberating your palate as well as your grocery budget makes sense to you, perhaps you'll reconsider your diet. You and I can hang out cutting up vegetables while everyone else eats dumpstered doughnuts and roadkill. Maybe veganism will get so trendy again that we'll have to rebel against it once more! See you behind the supermarket, Editor B.

DISASTER AND THINKTANK

"In a thinktank, a specific amount of time and space is set aside explicitly for the attainment of a specific impossible goal." —Manifesto on Concentration, 1914

During the second world war, Colditz Castle, a one-thousand-year-old fortress near Dresden, was chosen by the Nazis to serve as a high security POW camp. Colditz was prison to the most dogged allied escapers, and as a result it became an elite school of escape.

After several failed attempts involving such standard tactics as hiding places, disguises, and ropes, the prisoners' "escape committee" approved a plan to depart by air. In 1943, the prisoners began building a glider that was to be launched from the rooftop of the castle and piloted to a field across the nearby river. Over the next year, the glider was assembled entirely out of parts of the prison: floorboards, bed sheets, improvised fasteners, adhesives and tools. Just before the craft was ready to fly Colditz was liberated by allied troops. The voyage was never attempted.

A Nova documentary, entitled *Escape from Castle Colditz*, offers a nostalgic and dramatic presentation of the story. The documentary comes complete with a "re-creation" of the original Colditz glider—purportedly constructed following the original plans. At the conclusion of the documentary the glider is successfully flown for the witness of a vanload of octogenarian Colditz vets. It's a breathtaking moment.

Dubious congruency between the original glider and the simulation

notwithstanding, the need of the documenters to answer "the big question"—would it have flown?—just misses the point.

What was the point? First, consider that, regardless of the flight-worthiness of the glider, it was an absolutely terrible concept for getting POWs back to the front lines. It took years to build. It required a huge amount of resources and the energy of dozens of prisoners. For all that exertion, the glider was to carry just two prisoners. Worse still, assuming a flawless flight, the escapees would have landed in a field just 1000 meters away. Such a position was far from escape. Earlier attempts had clearly established that the walls of the prison were a minor barrier compared to the navigating of hundreds of miles of enemy territory.

So in the terms of standard escapes from standard prisons, the Colditz glider was a ridiculous scheme. The plan looks different, however, if we adjust the notion of what constitutes prison. If prison is not a singular condition of spatial confinement but a spectrum of confinements ranging in concreteness from iron bars to endless peacetime suburbia, what qualifies as a successful escape can diversify as well.

Whether the escape is from a high security POW camp or the high security of a living room sofa, the best plans succeed not because

¹ For a definition and thorough discussion of the "thinktank" approach to concentrated activity, consult the features section of *Inside Front* #13.



they cross a demonstrable line from "not-free" to "free" but because they play with and within the terms of confinement. What changes one's relationship to confinement more than a secret plan? The Colderitz story is a perfect example. Because the glider plan was so far off the map, it was able to fly below the radar. It did succeed, at least in its penultimate goal, but I argue that it also claimed its ultimate goal: to re-create prison (both literally and figuratively) on the terms of the prisoners. With the glider, the soldiers escaped the prison of awaiting rescue and the prison of escapist routine (double entendre intended). Also, as much to their chagrin as to their longevity, the soldiers escaped the confinement of the terms military conflict and service had imposed on their lives since the beginning of the war.

Crisis Chronicles

Popular culture is full of crisis stories. These stories work in different ways. Colderitz is an example of a kind of bourgeois crisis story. In this type, moderately- to highly-empowered protagonists experience a loss of power or choice, which exposes atavistic capabilities or freedoms.

Stories of contingency cannibalism are an extreme example of this. Cannibalism is one of the "fundamentals" that separate "civil" humans from a notion of uncivil humans and animals. Such stories are case studies proving the negotiability of even the most fundamental taboos—they are coded maps to loopholes in the social contract, if you will.

In the film *Alive*, a rugby team's airplane crashes in the Andes—and we witness an experiment we could never produce. The hypothesis, that certain fundamental morals separate civil humans from uncivilized humans and beasts, goes unsupported when the survivors begin eating the

casualties. The story is a convincing counterpoint to the moralism of fictional heroes like Odysseus who would starve to death before eating Apollo's sheep.

A scenario like the one represented in *Alive* calls all manner of lesser rules and morals into question. The film's airplane can be viewed as a symbol representing civilization, institution, government; it is a system that offers a service or a measure of protection in exchange for compliance to its rules. A contract exists between the passengers and the plane: the plane safely transports the passengers, the passengers behave within certain limits. But when the plane crashes it is not too long before the passengers adjust their behavior to suit a new arrangement. This is the refrain of the bourgeois crisis story: when protection is withdrawn those who were protected stop paying tribute.

Emergency Liberation

I am not suggesting that instances of contingency cannibalism expose a hidden desire of humans to eat one another. These stories simply describe an upper range of the adjustments that socialized humans are capable of making.

In crisis stories, barriers between human and nature break down, class becomes irrelevant or just silly, and the dispossessed or complacent become active. What appears to be going on with the popularity of crisis stories is a latent anarchist curiosity. The crisis story is a thought experiment. It wonders out loud what it would be like to live with radically different rules.

The story of the Swiss Family Robinson, while certainly an idealized tale, implicitly contains a notion of disaster as a kind of liberation. This liberation is not a utopian end-to-struggle or a glorified primitivism; it is a liberation from the notion that meaning and well-being are

inextricably linked to civilization. At the point of crisis, the family's connection to civilization is severed. When their ship wrecks, traditional modes of power, choice, security, and luxury are lost; yet, as the story develops, happiness and meaning are retained. Furthermore, a kind of urgency and adventure take over, and we marvel at the ingenuity and cooperation that result.

Thankfully, those most attractive elements of the crisis can be detached from the crisis itself. There is no need to pray for the ambiguous good fortune of the Swiss Family Robinson. The desirable aspects of crisis are even commonplace—an easy example is the snowstorm or blackout that temporarily halts the normal flow of life. This could mean you finally meet the neighbor that has lived beside you for a year—and the two of you sit around all day trading stories, eating food from defrosting freezers.

Crisis Programming

Crisis stories almost always show an institution or symbol of an institution being destroyed and the subsequent triumph of something human. Considering this, what could be more dangerous to institutions than a popular fascination with crisis? The circulation of propagandistic "crisis spectacles" is one way institutions divert or defuse such subversive interests and desires.

"Reality" television is a prominent spectacle that serves this function. In the typical mode of the crisis story, many reality shows represent characters in eccentric scenarios working with novel rules. Of course, such shows are not designed to inspire people at home to experiment themselves, but rather to continue watching as actors² perform skits about such things.

Consider the "reality" teevee show, *Survivor*. It would be wrong to think of *Survivor* as an updated version

² Yes, let's not kid ourselves, these "real (people)" are actors, just like "actors" are real people! What's an actor, anyway? *Survivor* contestants are carefully cast for their rolls. They perform their character for a camera, on set or on location. After filming, a director selects from the footage to create the desired characters and stories.

of *Gilligan's Island*. The *Gilligan's Island* "crisis" is a cooperative and funny respite from class, law and luxury. *Survivor*, on the other hand, is a total inversion of that premise. The characters contend in a winner-takes-all, losers-take-none scenario of scheming and backstabbing. Apparently, the free market survived the show's hypothetical shipwreck! This isn't the survival story we are used to; this is the capitalist survival story as celebrity feud or sporting event. Instead of selling soap, *Survivor* employees sell the citizen-testimonial that life without sofa, television, hierarchy, capital, cops, etc. is a life of even more conflict, misery, and destructive competition than we (the privileged) currently experience.

To complete the image, *Survivor* adds the justice of Uncle-Sam-style Democracy to the story. So, although the reasons that a particular character survives (wins) seem petty and arbitrary, the whole selection process is run by vote. Indeed, the losers who go home with nothing do so by voting for the winner. For the winner, the prize is the very cat in whose (supposed) absence the mice did play: a one million dollar

check that fortifies against a single additional day of "survival." Here, crisis fetish, with all its anarchist underpinnings, is being reigned in and re-presented as aggressively as possible. The embarrassing magnitude of the lengths to which the programmers have to go is quite inspirational—can our yearning for trouble be that dangerous to them?

Thinktank and "Reality" [Television]

The thinktank experiments certainly feed off of the same desires for alternate systems that are vented in reality TV. Ultimately, however, they undercut these spectacles, because those participating in their own projects are not watching, reading, or purchasing products, not buying into passive participation.

It certainly seems that contemporary media must walk an increasingly fine line in order to both display "real people" doing interesting and eccentric things AND discourage

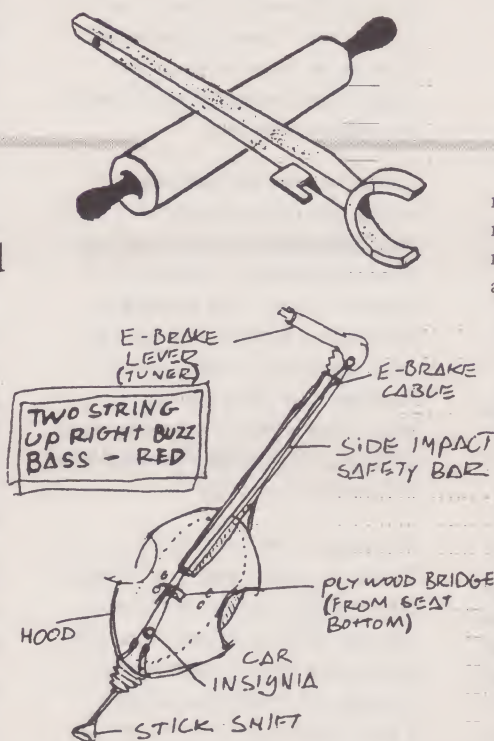
(ostensibly the same pool of) real people from following suit. People sometimes ask, when they hear about our latest thinktank project, if we are emulating our favorite television shows. I only wish I saw *Survivor* or *Junkyard Wars* and said to myself, "Well, hell! We can do that." No, sad to say, I actually came to think-tanking through unmediated brainstorming and barnstorming with friends. But if television programmers ever actually mess up enough to bump a few customers from spectators to participants, that's just the kind of slippage I can get behind.

Auto Revision—and to Answer Your Question

The Automobile Revision Project¹ was a tabletop crisis, a bench test. The primary characteristics were all there: limited choices, inspired work, unity of purpose, sparse amenities. But the most important characteristics were our locally determined rules. Our central legislation was the discarding of volumes of legal and social code governing the uses of a car. As with many crisis situations, what had been product became a material, what had been solid became fluid.

To our interest, our visitors could

¹ In this project, a small team of folk-scientists locked themselves in a squatted garage with an automobile, which they proceeded to deconstruct and fashion into a variety of musical instruments. For a detailed account of this notorious thinktank, consult the pages of the first issue of *Hunter/Gatherer*, available from most CrimethInc. cells.



rarely be shocked by us breaking the rules of car nation. But the broken rules of sanitation and privacy were a different story. For all the strange things that one could hear and see through our window, visitors' concerns were concise: number one, what do we do about poo, pee and bathing; number two, "Aren't you killing each other in there?"

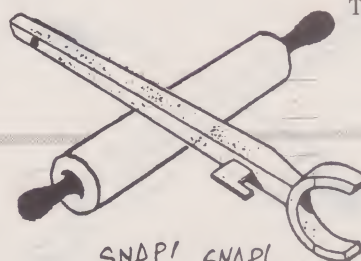
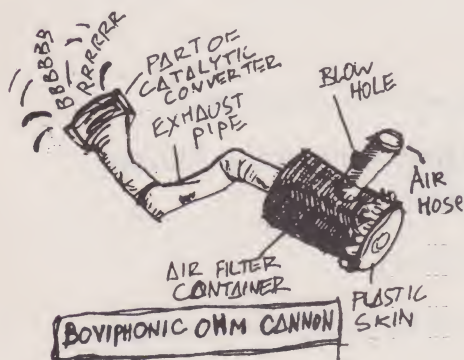
The questions seemed so strange. Was it "reality television" that naturalized the idea that humans just don't get along with one another—or is that a central myth underpinning our entire civilization? Do we really owe what little harmony we have to smelling fresh, flush toilets, mobility, privacy, and distance communication?

For me the Auto Revision was a

Thinktank in Action: Kitchen Renovation Theater.

Between March 1 and March 14, 2003 five researchers continuously occupied the kitchen of an abandoned house in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Over those two weeks, the investigators deconstructed everything, both tangible and intangible, they could get their hands on or wrap their minds around, and reassembled the pieces into props, sets, puppets, musical instruments, ideas, and scripts for a series of performances. When the two weeks were up, the cooks exited the kitchen to present their inventions and discoveries in a series of performances in a number of cities.

counterpoint to all that. For two weeks, we didn't shower or change clothes, we slept on the ground, and we used a bucket as a toilet. Those things caused no stress. For two weeks we couldn't check e-mail or talk to anyone at a distance. We also couldn't talk privately about anyone else in the room. Those



things acted to eliminate many standard collaborative stresses. For a visitor to see what was going on in the micro-culture of the Auto Revision she/he had to see through the surface of restrictions into the world those restrictions revealed.

This was a world in which we couldn't run errands—but we also "couldn't" sit

1. Recipe: How to Turn A Kitchen Into a Puppet Show²

A variant of a food long known to the ancient elders of (fill in your favorite romantic indigenous culture), this recipe makes a sturdy and nutritious dough that can be easily altered to taste. Keep your kitchen stocked with the basic ingredients so you can whip up a batch whenever you feel your blood or other humors getting thin.

Basic Ingredients:

- Time (We used a heaping two weeks)
- Kitchen (An abandoned kitchen is best—we found ours in Pittsburgh)
- Participants (5 is ideal, although we found that 4 1/2 can add an unexpected effervescence)
- Food (Enough to eat healthily for the period of the project, but should also include silly food: marshmallows, pickles, seaweed, coconuts, etc.)
- Solitude (Nothing in, nothing out once the door is closed. Like a soufflé, this recipe will fail if it comes in contact with the outside world before it has fully risen.)

Tools (depends on the interests of the cooks, but strong suggestions include):

in traffic. By design of the project, all of the solutions were right before our eyes. We worked at interesting activities all day, without interruption. We cooked for each other every evening, and talked about new ideas as we ate. Every evening, we played the instruments we had made that day. Every night we fell asleep totally exhausted. That is to say: things were great, so great that we began to turn the question around—asking visitors, "Aren't you killing each other out there?" And, of course, the answer is, "Yes, even with showers."

"If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape, and to aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy." -Article 3, U.S. Military Code of Conduct

² Remember that puppets don't have to be made of socks or papier mache. Anything can be a puppet: a hardboiled egg, a potato peeler, a beet, a plastic grocery bag, a piece of celery, a yellow plastic glove, a clothes pin, or your own precious and irreplaceable self. You've heard of puppet governments, haven't you?

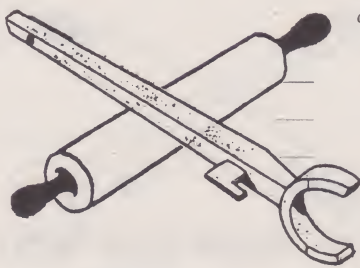
On Day 17 I found myself alone in the kitchen for one rare moment. We were packing up and getting ready to go; the kitchen was nearly stripped except for a jar of Beth's sprouts and some burnt toast on the windowsill, and a few last banana peels, shrunk down to the size of vanilla beans, hanging on the clothesline over the stove—the stove and oven themselves non-functional because the gas company had forgotten about us. We didn't actually care about the gas since we cooked our meals and deep fried our puppets on a Coleman stove set on top of the white enameled range, and heat was easy to compensate for with sweaters and bathrobes. The fact that the phone company forgot us as well was a bit more of a problem since the only information exchange—not so much exchange as monologue—we had with the non-kitchen world flowed through our crabapple-sized webcam. We had solved that problem on Day 4 by lowering a note with a quarter taped to it out the window, asking a passing stranger to go into the coffee shop below us and call a friend to call the phone company, which both the stranger and the friend generously did. After that we were on-line, although still without phone since Noel had gutted the telephone and made a kick drum pedal out of the hang-up mechanism and an ocarina out of the receiver. We didn't miss the phone; we didn't miss the world, which felt increasingly remote and constricted as our kitchen expanded. In two weeks the kitchen had gone from an inert and arbitrary container of air to an entire continent criss-crossed by our hunting and gathering, freighted with the histories we had brought in with us and the histories we had created. I stood on a chair with a damp sponge in my hand and unscrewed the light bulbs.

The kitchen light had been burning non-stop since Day 11 when Mark pulled too hard on the chain. That was during one of our nearly-every-night performances for each other, this one at the end of the day when we had agreed not to speak for 24 hours, a day of comforting, comfortable silence. Justin had come up from the coffee shop—he was considerably younger than the rest of us, less sure about two weeks of

confinement. He redefined his own kitchen to include the coffee shop beneath where he went from writing angry poetry at a small table to getting a job washing dishes behind the counter. Our only knowledge of the coffee shop was the music that traveled up through the water pipes behind the compost bucket and the limited gossip Justin brought us; the coffee shop became a land of conjecture at the edge of the map of the world, an alien culture with a single ambassador. Justin came in with a loud sound of foot stomping and the smell of late winter air. He chided us for our silence: "You've got to communicate to get anything done," he said, and went out again. We went back to our silence, listening to Noel pluck heartbreakingly sweet notes on the egg slicer under the cabinet.

We hardly noticed the light on after that, since by then we had only four days left before our first performance. The kitchen itself was an extended affair—actually a small abandoned apartment, its white walls grimed to the color of melted coffee ice cream, nothing but a tiny kitchen, a kind of dining nook, and a living room that opened off the dining room through a handy proscenium arch: the kitchen, the auxiliary kitchen, and the outer kitchen. We did have a bathroom and one other room, a chilly, remote bedroom down the hall where we kept our bedding during the day and where no one liked to go—too far out in the wilderness. We preferred to be in the human warmth of the kitchen where the walls expanded to accommodate our expanding understanding of each other. We slept all over the place—sometimes in the living room, sometimes on the kitchen floor all bunched up like puppies, sometimes in a corner half out, half under the table. We ate on the floor in the dark; at the table by candlelight, the candles held in place with wrenches or melted onto pieces of toast; standing up. On Day 3 we agreed that we hadn't fully explored the variations on eating so that night we held our soup spoons with

salad and toast tongs, levering the spoons upward towards our mouths like herons. Afterwards we outlined the splotches on the tablecloth with markers and dated them, a record of our passing as casual and rare as dinosaur footprints. As dinner ended someone lifted a pair



Soup pot
Screwdriver
Drill
Skill saw
Rubber bands
Duct tape
Bamboo skewers
Knife
Can opener

the inner meat, and spice to taste. Perform for audiences in children's museums, punk spaces, art galleries, coffee shops, community centers, and church basements (may be varied infinitely). Keeps well if preserved in video and 'zine form.

...and another version of the same prescription...

2. Recipe: Kitchen Renovation Dinner Theater [Thinktank 18]

2 weeks of time free and clear

5 organic free range strangers born in at least three different decades

1 kitchen squatted or borrowed

Mix together the basic ingredients and apply tools. Set a task, preferably a performance. Tell stories, laugh, play word games, sleep, saw things, take things apart, look out the window, cook, feed each other, find the slumbering music in telephone receivers, egg slicers, cabbage, wine glasses, pot lids, sifters, and wooden spoons. Peel off received identities, functions, utilities, and rules. Mince, puree, chop, parboil, deep fry, and mash

of tongs and clashed the jaws together lightly and we all joined in, a delicate whispery percussion that filled the whole candlelit kitchen and drowned out the sound of traffic on the street.

One day we saw snow fall outside our window; one night we heard a gunshot in the street and watched the reflection of the blue lights of the police cars slide across the toasters and coffee pots lined up on the floor. We wondered sometimes what kind of world we would find when we came out of the kitchen, what state of war or almost war the world had tilted over into. Other times we laughed so hard we felt dizzy. In the morning I would wake up in a square of sunshine and listen to breathing. On Day 9 Beth cut my hair in the kitchen and trimmed back Noel's curls; she kept the hair in a measuring cup on top of the cabinet and from then on we measured our morning coffee water with a teacup. Beth and Mark discussed shaving off their eyebrows but they never did. On Day 3 I got out my iron and began fusing plastic grocery bags together into billowy lengths of gauzy tissue. I made a ball gown for myself, a butcher's apron for Beth, and a pair of pants for Justin, who had invented a new sport called cabinet boarding to compensate for the fact that his skateboard was locked in our car on the other side of Pittsburgh. Mark filmed him jumping over saucepans and catching the cabinet board in tongs; Noel composed a frantic soundtrack on his computer to the steady scratching of sliced cabbage.

On Day 1 Beth and I had taken down the torn and stained roller blinds from all the windows; one of them hung for two weeks from the light fixture over the table where Beth had suspended it for her first night's performance in which she retrieved a rubber glove with an electric mixer and twine. On Day 5 she unscrolled the other two blinds and cut out giant silhouettes of a fork and a spoon; she filled the spaces with more ironed grocery bags fused with cabbage leaves and beans. The two banners hung over the sofa for the duration of the kitchen universe. On the night of Day 7 Noel and Mark performed a show for us

100,000,000 unnecessary, poorly designed, poorly built, dangerous, ugly, downcast, abandoned or ignored kitchen tools marching through our lives on their merry way from bad idea to landfill

6 buckets food, food promises, food hang-ups, food imperatives, food traditions, food tragedies, food fads, food scares, food miracles, food allergies, food color, food poisoning, food for thought

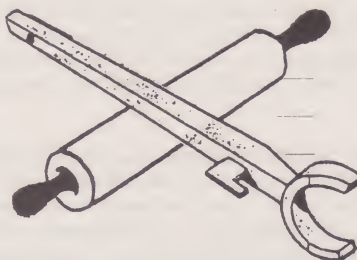
1 freezer-full of documentation equipment (very optional)

1 can opener

1,000 Chance operations, games, recombinations, lists, inversions, vague notions, questions, tools, thought crimes, enzymes.

on top of the kitchen cabinets among the cans and jars, advancing and retreating an argumentative carrot and a conciliatory piece of celery skewered on the slats from the bottom of the blinds. On Day 8 Noel drilled holes in one of the aluminum rollers and made it into a flute. Our world pulsed with abundance. There was too much wealth in the kitchen to mine in just two weeks: blenders we never took apart, colorful wires kicked to one side because we didn't have time to make them into jewelry, can lids that never got snipped into stars. We were busy from the moment we woke up every morning until we shoved aside the drills and microwave parts and unrolled our sleeping bags well after midnight.

By Day 14 there was no sleep. Mark was the first to leave in the early minutes of the last day, sent out into the world to bring back wood and more tools. Noel and Beth and I stood in the lighted doorway, listening to Mark descend into the dark. We hovered at the threshold but couldn't bring ourselves to cross quite yet. The world we had created was as temporary as the first intensity of love—we knew that—we just didn't want it to end. Our world inside the kitchen was infinite; the world beyond was hedged with constraints and habits, with too much information. In the enormous kitchen everything shimmered with possibility; the world outside seemed narrow and static. We left, of course, in the end. The bombs fell across the ocean and on the screens of a million television sets. We hadn't changed anything—we hadn't set out to change anything. We had simply tethered ourselves for a few weeks in a world that kept changing all on its own, that was so rich and so vast and so full of delight that it would have taken a lifetime to understand. And we spent a lifetime there, a two week lifetime. I wondered as I unscrewed the last light bulb if I should have waited for everyone to stand and mark the moment with me, but it was too late for that. The light had gone out in the kitchen as soon as we opened the door, or rather had moved on to another place, been swallowed and digested and become part of our gristle and bone.



Spread news of an unlikely activity that will result in an as-yet unknown performance. Arrange for as many places to perform as time and resources allow.

Enter kitchen and lock the door behind you. Agree as a group that no one will leave for two weeks. Get to work. Recklessly feast on all ingredients. Hold gatherings every night in which participants or pairs of participants present the day's thoughts and work in the form of ad hoc performances. On Day 10, start reconsidering performances and objects made so far. Choose what you would like to serve to those outside of the kitchen. Rehearse, add, subtract. Open door. Serve leftovers.



For more information about this and other thinktanks, write Tank-thInc. c/o CrimethInc. Headquarters, or email iamtheyeast@hotmail.com or hobblidhoy@aol.com or visit www.tankthink.com

white shark tales anarchy in the u.s.a. vanarchy in the u.s.a.

The strength of capitalism lies in its ability to make us be still. Where there is stillness, there is the danger of being chained down. It slips upon you like a thief in the night, tip-toeing past your defenses. It first appears in many guises—careers, expectations, degrees, promises . . . parents, neighbors, children, employees, students, rent, mortgages, plans that we never had a say in and futures that aren't ours to possess. Yes, the capitalist thief moves quietly in the night, and the thief is efficient. The thief takes everything, and leaves you nothing but a shell, a cheap imitation of the life you really want. However—can the thief rob your house if you don't have one?

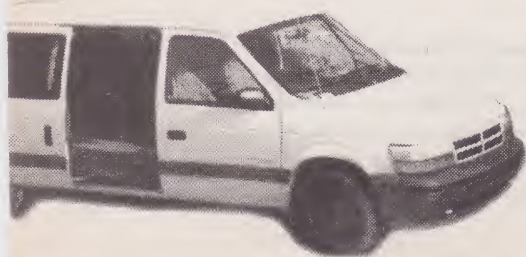
Yet how can you have no house, no possessions, nothing to your name but the clothes on your back? Simple. You must always be on the move.

There are many paths that leave this world of poor-paying jobs and unfulfilling lives. To each her own path—it would be arrogant to attempt to tell you what your path is out of the mundane humiliations of everyday life. In sheer physical terms, there are many ways to be on the move. You can just walk to the side of the road and stick out your thumb, and a stranger will pick you up and take you on the road. For those of you who enjoy the usage of your legs, you can always just walk through the woods, relying on wild berries and the kindness of a stranger farmer for a bowl of porridge in the morning. Some may enjoy hopping on the underground railroad, modern-day hobos criss-crossing the country on the forgotten industrial skeleton of our most digital of societies. For me, it was a White Shark that stole my heart. Nothing much, just a normal white van, of cheap make and dodgy American build. I'm not sure how it all came to pass, how the Shark was released upon the country to wreak innumerable acts of utter piracy, revolt, and complete lack of regard for all capitalist values (except excessive gasoline consumption). I remember only that there was nothing left for me where I was. There had been too many horrors, too much failure—glorious failure, but failure nonetheless—and I felt like a ghost in my own hometown. It occurred to me that maybe I needed a change of surroundings, so I grasped my best brother-in-arms Ishmael by the shoulder one lonely night and told him we should do it, just leave it all behind. We met with an elite group of co-conspirators gathered in the wreckage of the former anarchist compound amongst the slowly creeping kudzu. We decided to leave right then and there the ruins of our youth, and we gave little heed to the future. All we had was a few ideas, a few dates and events, a few scraps of a plan, and an atlas. Being a generous soul, I volunteered my old van, purchased from one of my neighbors whose mother had recently died, for transport. After all, we had to make it to these events on time, and train-hopping and hitch-hiking are notoriously unreliable. Little did I know we were releasing a monster, a monstrous shark the like of which I have yet to see again.

None of these stories are fictional, despite their ludicrous nature. Indeed, all have happened to me. However, names have been changed to protect the innocent (or, to be precise, the not-so-innocent), and the chronological order of events has been changed to throw off the fucking feds! Also—these adventures haven't been written down to glorify the last year of my life, but to bear witness to the possibilities all of us have before us. Indeed, there are many adventures of grander scope than mine in this world, but I still hope these tales warm some lonely soul . . . and cause her to quit her job, jump in her van, and never look back.

...in which a boy and his van set
out to liberate each other...

by Secret Agent Captain Ahab



Only a Manner of Time Before Banks.

Somehow, the White Shark had swallowed Isabella from Brazil, although exactly how was somewhat of a mystery. Perhaps it was because she had just been arrested at some demonstration in Philadelphia (and I'm sure the paranoid Philadelphia cops were shocked by her passport—the international conspiracy of anarchists manifesting itself!). Perhaps it was because the white van had carried the CrimethInc. troupe to a presentation in Worcester where we complemented her video with a band made purely out of dumpstered metal scraps we had found around town the day before. To be honest, I have no idea. The White Shark is a magnet for discontents and malcontents with absolutely no respect for borders, and its siren-song is hard for anyone to resist.

One problem about the White Shark is you have to feed her to keep her happy, and she takes no other food other than gasoline, occasionally garnished by oil and transmission fluid. We had made our way to Maine after ending the North American Insurrection Tour in New York City (due to unfortunate circumstances, but mostly just having been around each other for so long we just hated each other!). Now, with every single member of our merry crew utterly and completely broke, how we were going to escape the ever-pleasant woods of Maine was going to be a problem. The obvious thing to do was to just steal the gas, which we had done a few times before. However, in the words of Ishmael, "Sometimes you gotta keep the small laws to break the big ones," and given that the White Shark currently carried one recently arrested international and at least one felon, getting caught brazenly stealing gas would be amateur. Also, one key to stealing gas is having multiple escape routes, and Maine has really only one highway. There had to be an easier way to get money. After considerable deliberation at our secret log cabin deep in the woods of Maine, we took out maps and decided we were going to do a raid at a Wal-mart shopping center in the port of Augusta. Ishmael had protested its construction years earlier, so at least one of the company was familiar with the territory. We decided the most cunning path would be for us to enter the shopping center and steal everything we could get our grubby hands on, getting money to feed the monstrous hunger of the white van from various cryptic return scams and shady pawn shops.

Filling the van with dumpstered chips (Maine seems to specialize in Frito-Lay dumpsters!), we left with enough rations to make it to the next port of call, and came up with a scheme on the way. We would walk into a very expensive and over-priced yuppie store that was known to be exceptionally vulnerable to return scams. Given that it was a small store, an advance squad would distract the few employees with various requests, while one guerrilla warrior-thief would walk in—cool as ice—and fill a backpack full of loot, then run out, to be intercepted by the Shark who would be waiting obediently outside. We should have known the best laid schemes of sharks and men can go awry.

As a member of the advance squad and perpetrator of innumerable thieveries, even I was shocked by how easily the two employees were hoodwinked into leaving their positions unguarded. We went in, dressed the best we could as yuppie

shoe-shoppers, and demanded new shoes. Both employees simultaneously left the cash register and disappeared into the mysterious netherworld of shoes that must have been somewhere out of sight in some closet in the store. The guerrilla came in, grabbed a backpack, and with a smile on his face began throwing all manner of loot into his bag. It all appeared to be going well when, to our dismay, another customer walked in! This ordinary bourgeois customer immediately noticed that something was not right with this shop, and yelled for the employees. The guerrilla, ever quick, fled the store full backpack in hand before the employees bumbled from their closets of shoes. Not sure what to do, we decided to delay the employees, questioning both of them as regards the whereabouts of our demanded shoes, denying the existence of the shoplifter that the other customer saw race through the door. After several minutes of complete confusion by the employees, they decided that something weird definitely was going on and called the police. We kept up a whirlwind of utter lies and ridiculous demands upon the employees till the bitter end, but when they picked up the phone to call the police, we felt we might be suspected of collusion with the more obvious criminal elements of our enterprise. We politely made our farewells and fled the scene of the crime ourselves. Quickly I made it back to the helm of the White Shark, where a wanted political criminal who had wisely avoided participation in the crimes of the day reminded me we had to get him away from the scene of the crime, and whispered that he had grabbed the loot the criminal had wisely dropped near the Shark on the way out of the store. The White Shark bucked, and we ran behind the store complex, hoping to outrun the police and find our erstwhile guerrilla friend. Unfortunately, he wasn't there, and, seeing the police car roll into the shopping center, we quickly sped away through another exit.

Making very quick decisions, I decided it would be best to get all possible criminals (except myself!), felons, and recently stolen goods out of the van. However, we couldn't leave our friend in the claws of the police. Quickly, I grabbed Isabella and told her that she should exit the van and begin a search for the guerrilla thief, and if he was seen to tell him to hide away as far in the woods as possible. She was to meet us in front of the shopping center and inform us of his general location, as soon as she communicated this to our companion. Not feeling entirely right for dropping off a South American revolutionary in the middle of a desolate shopping center that was currently being occupied by the police, the van sped off. I wondered what a parallel situation would be in like Brazil—what if a group of Brazilian anarchists left me as a scout in the middle of Sao Paulo? After getting a few miles away from the site of the crime, the more criminally wanted of our crew jumped out the van with the loot, and fled far into the woods after a few minutes conversation about the various bird-calls and honks I should use to announce the return of the Shark. Quickly, the White Shark sped back around and headed back into the mouth of the enemy. Indeed, the police car was right outside the recently robbed yuppie-store, and Isabella was walking about the complex looking nonplussed about the entire situation. I rode up and she jumped into the van, informing me that the police were still in the store questioning the employees, but she had not seen our missing guerrilla. In complete panic, the Shark prowled around the parking lot looking for its missing servant—and out of the corner of our eyes we spotted a shirtless vagrant in the woods on top of a hill! It was our guerrilla, shirt torn off, looking

like some strange escaped Cro-Magnon man gazing upon the concrete landscape of an encroaching alien civilization.

Now, the mind of a thief works in strange ways, and whenever I see a young man with his shirt off in the woods I know he is trying to escape the cops. Obviously, the first thing someone is going to tell a cop about a criminal is his clothing description. So, the bright criminal is either going to change clothing, or, lacking a spare change of clothing, just take the shirt off! Myself, I wasn't sure exactly what the cop would do if he saw a young and shirtless man in the woods. I recognized the dire situation, and the van pulled up as near as it could, as our young guerrilla charged headlong into the open maw of the shark. Fellow pirate safe and no cops in pursuit, we rolled back to the mysterious spot in the woods where we had dropped off the rest of the crew. Unfortunately, in the heat of moment I had completely forgotten where exactly I had dropped them off. As night approached, it was beginning to look like we would never find them again. I started honking the horn wildly, driving like a madman up and down the street. Out of the corner of my mind I thought I recognized the spot where I had dropped off my compatriots. Jumping out of the car, I heard what could only be the sound of semi-automatic weapons! After fiddling with the bird-calls for a few minutes, I just began yelling for them. Within minutes, the criminal underclass reappeared from the woods, scared out of their wits. "They're shooting fucking guns, I don't know who they are but these fucking woods are being pumped full of metal!" Recognizing the perilous nature of being stuck in the woods with gun-toting Mainards, we jumped back into the safety of the van and sped off into the distance.

I looked into Isabella's eyes, trying to give some semblance of an explanation to our behavior in the last few hours. I didn't know what other types of activists or revolutionaries she had been hanging out with beforehand. How did this compare to what anarchists did in Philadelphia...or Brazil? I imagine most of the circles in Brazil put our petty crime to shame. I fumbled for words, trying to explain what we were doing. "We're not exactly activists you know...we're anarchists...we're sort of cousins to outlaws, but we have a mission in life, you know?" I could see the gleam in her eye. She knew. Welcome to the States!

Revolution in the Heartland

The van drove and drove and drove. To all of us in its depths, it soon became obvious that this was not just an ordinary van, but a van with the heart of an animal. Very quickly, small parts of its machinery of lesser quality soon fell apart. First it was a tire, then a strange part of radiator, then yet another unnamable piece of metal. Like some ungodly monster, sometimes it appeared as if the van was reducing itself to the very minimum needed for the trip. Four of us in a van, keeping each other in good spirits with stories and memories, dehydrating in the summer heat. Sneaking in and out of campsites without paying, attempting to find back-roads into the Badlands, running out of gas in the middle of the Badlands, a kind indigenous family providing us gas from their own personal store. Clearly we were slowly going mad in the van—I was even struck down with blindness due to poison ivy in my eyes! Yet the White Shark kept chugging along, ruthlessly plowing across the country all night. Ishmael

drank cup of coffee after cup of coffee, and the black liquid of darkness fueled our madness. Many a lonely gas station was left short of food and gas, and many an anarchy symbol scribbled on a bathroom wall.

Small towns appeared before us, and in every one we found a little cell of anarchists plotting the destruction of civilization as we know it. No town was safe from the rapacity of the White Shark. We would pull into the parking lots of shopping centers, walk in without a cent, and walk out our pockets full of fruit and vegetarian sushi—and if we were feeling lucky, one of us would run out with a full shopping cart of wine and soy cream! In one small town, the girlfriend of our host called to tell her boyfriend that some strange vagrants had walked into the store, clearly stole large sums of food, and walked out—and every employee knew, but no one could be bothered to stop them because it was so humorous. Laughing, our host told his girlfriend to come over and meet the culprits. We created anarchy anywhere and everywhere, yelling revolutionary manifestos in coffee-shops in Des Moines, organizing discussions with Christian straight edge kids about abortion rights, rioting—and throwing donuts!—against cops on the streets of America's largest suburbs, cheering our hip hop comrades the Insurrectionists as they spun poetry that mixed equal parts relativity theory and John Brown practice for crust-punks in warehouses and hip art crowds in New York City. We even played basketball with kids outside church, and then snuck in to steal their food! Everywhere, not just anarchists, but anarchy itself.

It was soon obvious that we were in no mere van, but some strange animal hell-bent on destruction. We imagined—or did we?—a large fin rising from its white roof; and did not the grill of our vehicle appear to be a gaping maw? The white van clearly had been hiding a secret identity from us the entire time. Like some bizarre automobile superhero—our van was actually a White Shark! Despite innumerable tires blown, arrests for mob action, being late for our own shows, and alternating between loving and hating each other, the van—by now clearly becoming more and more animal—finally made it to the Earth First! Round River Rendezvous in Wyoming. H. Rap Brown (who, I might add, our government has framed for murder and thrown in jail!) was only partially right. Anarchy is as American as apple-pie.

The first night at the rendezvous, rumor broke out a local bar was offering, I kid you not, one hour of free beer. Immediately, dozens of smelly anarchists piled into the belly of the white shark, arms and legs sticking out at all possible angles from every possible orifice—window, that is. Barely able to move, I somehow drove the mad creature down to the local bar. When we entered it, we were quickly surrounded by cowboys: huge men with giant muscles, tight jeans, and mighty mustaches that would make Emiliano Zapata proud. As everyone sat down and drank beer after beer, it quickly became apparent that the anarchists had wandered into the wrong bar. The largest cowboy with the most terrifying visage of all of them began to systematically harass the smallest woman who had come with us. The largest anarchist amongst us, a mighty redneck himself from the wild woods of Maine, inserted himself into what appeared was going to be a brawl between the local working class and the anarcho-eco-warriors. The night could not be going in a worst direction, and the cowboys were much more well-muscled than ourselves.

Luckily, at that moment a local folk singer, himself sporting a mighty beard, rose to the stage. The anarcho-redneck, realizing the fate of the Movement itself lay in the balance, called out for some Folsom Prison Blues:

I hear the train a coming, its rolling round the bend, and I ain't seen the sunshine since I don't know when, I'm stuck in Folsom Prison, and time keeps dragging on, but that train keeps on rolling, down to San Antoin...I shot a man in Reno, just to watch him die...when I hear that whistle blowing, I hang my head and cry



The cast of Eugenia and Wobbleo prepare to give the performance of their lives

As if by divine intervention, the crowd all began singing: cowboys, anarchists, roughnecks, eco-warriors, rednecks, eco-warriors, and hippies, all dancing like the devil himself possessed them. Every single one escaping their own personal Folsom prison, grasping shoulders and swaying to a man who could only be Johnny Cash reincarnated. Nothing could stop the crowd, and the man sang for hours. In fact, in the heat of the moment a train-hopper with a banjo jumped on stage and began playing with our cowboy singer. As soon as the cowboy singer stepped off the stage, the entire Dumpster Country Ramblers—a wild anarchist old-time music band if there ever was one!—jumped onto stage themselves, and began playing their hit single: *"With a Banjo and an AK-47 by my side..."* The cowboys kept going wild, and soon everyone was intermixing, talking about how much they hated politicians, kissing their sweethearts, and sharing stories about the mountains and woods. America, there is hope.

After a series of entertaining workshops, the highlight being How To Kill With A Mag-light, we decided it was time for CrimethInc. to manifest itself in a way it never had before, in a way that would be utterly entertaining, yet as relevant as it could be to the mangy hundred-odd anarchists and earth warriors congregating: we were going to throw a musical.

There have always been raging debates amongst the more intellectual of our brethren about what exactly things will "look like" after the revolution, despite these conversations doing little to nothing to bring anything even slightly resembling a revolution about. Of these debates, one of the most vicious and irrelevant has always been the "green vs. red"

anarchism debate...and we let our imaginations go with the flow. What if there was a Revolution and folks really divided upon those lines? What if Ted Kaczynski was freed from jail to lead the dread-locked green anarchists to victory against syndicates of red anarchists who controlled the manufacturing plants of Carhartts and Mag-lites? What if the daughter of Ted Kaczynski, Eugenia, fell in love with the young magnate of the One Big Union, Wobbleo? Yes, we had a plot for a play, and were going to call it Wobbleo and Eugenia.

Soon, we had gathered a horde of anarchists from every corner of the United States, with the dreadlocked greens putting twigs through their noses and reds bedecking themselves in full-length bright red pajamas. While the cleverness of the drama can never be conveyed to those who were not there, at one point the greens and the red anarchists, involved in a gang fight over the various interpretations of May-day (as either a pagan festival or celebration of workers rights) began singing to the tune of a fairly well-known boy-band song, My Way:

I want to have a class war, I want to see industrial collapse, I never want to hear you say... I want the revolution my way!

Soon, the green anarchists, engaged in acts of excessive pot-smoking, were infiltrated by the young Wobbleo, who wooed the beautiful Eugenia with his ode of how "he works everyday, and there's nothing that I own..." She let down her dreads and the burly Wobbleo, red cape and all, climbed into her tree-sit for a night of hanky-panky. And as soon as Ted

Kaczynski found out about her love-making with the enemy he quickly scolded her: "Don't you know that the Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been nothing but a disaster for the human race!" Soon, war broke out between the feuding anarchists, and as Wobbleo and Eugenia desperately hopped trains to have their child in a safe haven, the greens and reds began hacking each other to bits to the tune of Michael Jackson's "Beat It."

"You dumpster-dive to live, that ain't primitive, so beat it!" "We wear bones through our nose and we'll cut down your cell phone poles!"...until one green anarchist reveals a dirty secret: *"I got a trust fund and I got an SUV, it's parked over there right next to a tree..."* A hushed silence fell upon the collected forces of Earth First! For a second, we thought maybe our satire had hit a bit too close to home for some of those in attendance... but then the crowd burst out laughing. Surrounded by the dead bodies of their overly-ideological anarchist opponents, Eugenia gave birth to their green and red love-child—Plaid! Soon, the entire crowd began singing:

Why, why did the all anarchists die, was the theory too heavy and the logic to dry? If we dump the ideology and bake a new pie, maybe this won't be the day that we die, maybe this won't be the day we die..."

The Shark versus The International Monetary Fund

Of course, the Shark soon began looking for larger targets than yuppie shopping centers and greater dreams to host than traveling anarchist circuses...the Shark was straining at the leash. The Shark decided that only the largest of international financial institutions would satiate its eternal hunger for blood. Before even I knew it, I was driving with a small crew of anarchists to the hotel where the International Monetary Fund was meeting in a few short months. The hotel resembled nothing more than a nightmare of modern architecture, a veritable Death Star of comfort and luxury for the rulers of the world in the new millennium. Huge towering glass doors, giant towers and escapades. Yet, with all their might and power, how were we going to get in? There is always something to be said for walking through the front door.

Four smart but still black-clad anarchists walked right into the hotel where the International Monetary Fund was going to meet, without any of the staff even giving us a small blink. Quickly, we looked around—and it appeared that we were about to crash a party, a party named for some strange corporation with one of those oh-so-fashionable names to inspire investor confidence, like DigiCorp or NeoTech. Quickly realizing we were strangers in a strange land, we ran up the nearest stairs we could find, desperate to camouflage ourselves with any thin veneer of legitimacy. It appeared as if by magic: four mostly empty wine glasses left idly by. We grabbed them, and soon had metamorphosed from anarchist secret agents to slightly drunk and bewildered employees at a company party. Indeed, we heard loud pumping music below, and, never ones to forgo a dance party, we made it down the stairs and into one of the largest halls I have ever seen. A huge screen towered above hundreds of drunk employees in neat white shirts, with an image of a woman with perfectly manicured hair across an a sky so blue that it could only be digital. She spoke, and it was if God or Big Brother himself was speaking: "Welcome to the future..."

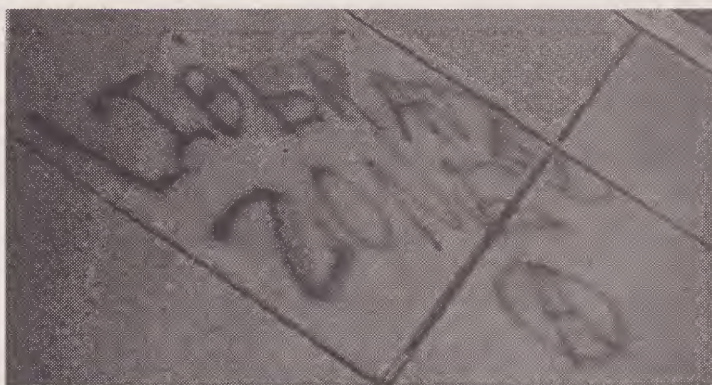
Aghast, we looked up, only to see a giant green dinosaur being slowly deflated by dozens of angry computer programmers and bureaucrats smashing it with giant rubber hammers. The future was apparently going to be very strange indeed. Although I was sorely tempted by what appeared to be free food near the sagging dinosaur, we thought actual employees, even if slightly drunk, might ask us which division we worked and so give us away to the authorities. Hand in hand, we fled upstairs.

Wandering throughout the halls of the future meeting place of the IMF, capitalist waste manifested itself as it always does at the most opportune of times. The halls of the hotel were lined with leftover room-service food that the chubby programmers and fat bureaucrats couldn't even finish. I immediately began a one-man mission to eat every last morsel I could. Half-finished martini in one hand, decadent half-eaten ice-cream in the other, I was unstoppable. We wandered floor after floor, and went up ten whole stories of sleeping chambers and wasted food. Whenever a hotel employee would appear

and ask us what were doing, we would leer drunkenly at him using our best acting skills and ask where some random room number was. "Oh, I'm so sorry...I thought I was on the fourth floor!" The security system completely compromised by four anarchists armed with empty wine-glasses.

We became bolder and bolder as night ticked on. Soon, even the drunkest of the employees of the computer company were going to bed, and the hotel became virtually empty...and all ours! We found strange staircases that went down into the depths of the hotel, walked down endless corridors and found doors to empty rooms and storage chambers. We conjectured that if we had been a bit more prepared and had brought a few months supply of food, we could hide in one of those rooms and come out in the middle of one of the meetings of the International Monetary Fund with our guns blazing. Using napkins found on silver platters found outside hotel rooms, we scrawled maps of the entire complex. Eventually, as we got deeper and deeper underground into service corridors with 'Employees Only' written on them, we would occasionally hear what sounded like an employee coming around the corner. Panicking, we would run around corners hold our breath, jumping into elevators and hitting any button we could to escape. Occasionally, we would have to confront some bored night employee late night. They would always be very perplexed by the appearance of four anarchists holding wine-glasses in a corridor which no one in their right mind could possibly have wandered into by accident. Yet we would hold to our story: "Oh, we must have walked down the stairs instead of up them to our rooms! What were we thinking?" Human beings, if given implausible situations, tend to accept even the most irrational of explanations as long as it lets them reconcile whatever is before their eyes with their internal conception of reality.

As dawn starting creeping up on us, we had actually scouted one of the largest hotels in the world completely out, and we decided to leave. On the way out, as all scouts are supposed to do, we checked door knobs to see if they were unlocked. Right next to the exit from the hotel we found a unlocked door that led straight to what appeared to be some ludicrously fancy, and completely closed, hotel restaurant. In every hotel restaurant there is a bar. And in every bar there is beer.



Where's the next liberated zone? Can we break into the oval office and nap there next?

Our logical chain complete, we jumped over the bar in the restaurant and started trying to open all the locked cupboards.

While the last employee at the restaurant had been bright enough to lock the wine-cupboard, they had left a giant case of iced beer and liquor completely open. Inside, it was like a treasure trove of beers with strange German names and liqueurs the like of which people of my social class aren't even supposed to know! We quickly stuffed our pockets with cans of the finest beer and peppermint schnapps, only to realize that there was no way we could carry it all out. After peering out the door, all four of us scampered out of the hotel and to the van, unloading our liquor on the way. Personally, I began feeling a bit paranoid, and thought that maybe this act was taking it just a little too far, that now we were dealing in pure hubris. However, the first beer run had only whetted our appetites. Grabbing our backpacks, we meandered right back into the hotel, walking through the front door, straight into the bar, and began filling our rucksacks with alcohol. In we went, and out we went, and in again, and out again...until every last beer was gone! In an act that can only be considered complete chutzpah, we had stolen the IMF's beer!

As we loaded up the white shark and our one other vehicle with the beer, we came to the realization that we had no idea what to do with the excessive amount of alcohol we had just stolen. The White Shark, drunk off its latest victory, seemed to be smiling upon us. Suddenly, a member of our jolly crew had a brilliant idea: We should give out the beer free at Food Not Bombs! Although it would surely be breaking one of the bylaws of the International Network of Food Not Bombs®, anyone who had to spend their nights hungry in DC at least deserved a beer to keep them warm. We drove it back to our secret anarchist hideout in the depths of the Capital itself, and, as we opened the back door, one of our compatriots came stumbling out of bed, red dreadlocks flying. When he heard the idea, he grinned. It was going to be one hell of a Food Not Bombs. Some may call it stealing, but as every modern-day Robin Hood knows: it's not theft, it's redistribution of wealth.

Intermezzo

The relationship between the driver and her car is hard to understand. Relationship is a dry word, a word used by dating guides in cheap newspapers and half-hearted people who are afraid to commit themselves to anything greater than a life of romance novels bought at supermarkets. The love between a car and her driver is hard to understand. The lines between us and our methods of transportation become fuzzy, and we melt into our own machinery. No words can express my affection for the White Shark: it feels more like home to me than any house I've ever lived in, and my sleeping bag has more fond memories associated with it than any floor the world over. Words cannot describe the many nights I've spent living in her metal shell, never able to stretch fully out—so leading to my habit of curling up like a wolf even when I sleep in a bed¹. The White Shark transformed with me, from a respectable minivan in which a mother might drive her child to a soccer match, to a torn up, smelly, vengeful, dark vagabond of the night. The paint started chipping, the white began to be encrusted with dirt that no amount of washing could fix, strange liquids continually leaked from its shadowy crevices. The tape player, often the only thing holding my sanity together in the darkest hours of those nights, even that turned cannibal, eating the

tapes we put into it. Yet despite all her flaws, and perhaps because of them, I loved the White Shark. You can have your fancy red Mercedes, yuppie scum—I'd rather spend the night with my old dirty van any day of the week. Rich and arrogant bourgeoisie of the world, behold the White Shark! Behold your future executioner!

The effect the White Shark had upon its inhabitants was positively insidious. Nothing could describe the effect of watching ordinary people, disillusioned with crappy jobs or boring lives, jump into the van and, before my very own eyes, be transformed into anarchist warriors at the beck and call of any good cause within driving distance. At first it started out as petty theft, money for gas, a few bites of food. As the distances and the glorious heights of the plans increased, everyone in the belly of the Shark slowly got more grizzled, their bodies more gaunt, and the mad look of a pirate entered in their eyes. Defending tree-sits in Ohio, offering eco-defense workshops in poor neighborhoods in Baltimore, defending indigenous lands in the highlands of New York state, fighting for squats in Manhattan...the White Shark made me believe in knights errant again. When you needed us, you just needed to get in touch with one of the associates of the White Shark and the fucking cavalry would be there the next morning.

Cars, like friendships, need maintenance. And so I descended into the inner depths of my vehicle, exploring its nooks and crannies. I knew her limits and she knew mine. I also befriended an anarcho-mechanic, the father of one of the members of the Company of the White Shark, who helped me maintain her. He repaired the cars of all the local street kids and neighbors in his own garage, and for far less than any auto-shop. He knew all the shadiest auto-parts dealers in town, and all the honest ones as well, and his word was as good as gold. As I returned again and again, after strange adventure after even stranger adventure, we bonded over the White Shark. He would tell me tales of his adventures in New Orleans and Mexico, and I would tell him of stealing food from hotels in French Canada and fighting cops in Philly. He taught me what a gasket was, what weird part of some strange metal piece connected to some other piece. In between inspecting one weird problem of the White Shark after another, he would mutter things like "That Ariel Sharon's a bloody butcher..." Indeed, both the shaggy-haired anarchist and the auto-mechanic with a family in the outskirts of the city agreed that Western civilization was headed straight towards its doom, and the President George W. Bush was a madman at the helm of sinking ship. Because of these things, our anarcho-mechanic continued to repair the White Shark, and I continued to drive the distance with the wild beast. We hypothesized that the beast would keep on going until there was nothing left but a whirling engine, a dying transmission, and a rusty metal frame, and then I would drive her into the ocean, lighting her on fire and giving her a proper Viking funeral.

In the Hands of Our Enemies

The White Shark is a wild beast, and while I may recount some of its nefarious adventures here, I can only recount those I know of. For the White Shark has been on many adventures that even I, its monomaniacal Captain, don't know of.

¹ Editor's note: Only in punk rock circles can you find people who approach sleeping as an extreme sport!

The White Shark does not just aid and abet thieves: the White Shark plans full frontal assaults on the foundations of capitalism itself, with a vengeance that would put most people to shame. The White Shark makes plans, and it sticks to them. As just related, the White Shark has a personal vendetta against the global financial system, especially the International Monetary Fund. Not too long after the beer had been stolen from the IMF, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon happened, and took even us aback. All the same, the White Shark was first and foremost a van of action, and while most of its activities after September 11th are too dark to recount in the light of day, it did successfully ferry us away from danger. However, its hunger for blood is insatiable, and before we knew it, it was driving us right back

but me and one of my most perceptive partners in crime noticed that such a huge banner was going to be completely impossible to carry. After all, it was larger than most anarchists, who by nature tend to be a short lot, and offered about as much tactical defense as a wet blanket. The wily White Shark, ever to the rescue, took us to the nearest home repair store where we began a brutal campaign of return scams to get a large amount of PVC pipe. With much PVC jutting out of the back of the White Shark, we drove back to the Anti-Capitalist Convergence Center and spent the entire night transforming the large banner into a formidable defense barrier by reinforcing its corners with plastic pipes. Our task done, we slept barely a wink before having to mobilize ourselves for the protest. As we wandered back into

the Convergence Center, one of the organizers ran up to us and told us that there was a serious problem: there was no way to transport the banners, including the marvelous pipe banner, to the actual site of the protest. Would the White Shark come to the rescue? But of course!

This was clearly going to be one of those sketchy situations. The black bloc had assembled, several hundred strong, in one of the small central parks in DC. They were just waiting for the banners. The White Shark parked behind some decrepit gas-station and released its scouts to check the situation out. When they returned noting the huge number of pigs but the clear passage-way for vehicles, the White Shark realized the time to act was now or never. The White Shark drove up maniacally right in front of the Black Bloc and released its doors. Out from its bowels came banner after banner, pipe after

pipe, flag after flag. As the Captain, I kept an eye on the cops, and they had definitely noticed this bit of maneuvering by a mysterious white van, as they started marching towards us. Panicking as the last banner was dropped off, I put the pedal to the metal and the White Shark sped away, down one road after another. Finally, we parked off what appeared to be a road in a residential area, carefully backing our van into the parking spot to have the license plate to the wall, and jumped out. I took all of the money I had to my name out of my pockets, a good crisp two hundred dollars in the form of two hundred dollar bills, and afraid they would get nicked by the police in the protest, I hid them in the ash-tray. Also, as I was living in the van at the time, all my possessions from my record collection to my two or three pairs of marginally clean underwear were in two huge black containers in the car. Throwing my bandana around my neck, I exited the White Shark and made a sprint to join the Black Bloc.

By the time I got there the banners were fully erect and ready to roll. In fact, the main black banner was simply too large—it towered over the heads of everyone in the Bloc except extremely tall people like myself. Small eye-slits were



The banner that nearly cost the White Shark its life!

to the meeting of the International Monetary Fund, which, despite the attack, had gone on. The White Shark dropped us off back at our secret anarchist hideout in the Capital, and we began preparing for what seemed to be one of the most frightening protests of our lives. It was clear this protest was no ordinary protest—and it wasn't going to be the North American version of Genoa we were all hoping for. No, this was testing the waters after a major terrorism attack and subsequent reactionary scare. The results of this test could be fatal as well, for now it was clear our government felt threatened and was looking for someone to lash out against. The bombing had just started on Afghanistan, and it was clear that one of the next things on their 'To-Do' list was to rid the world of those pesky anti-globalization protesters, especially the troublesome anarchists.

However, when the going gets tough, the tough rise to the occasion. As the White Shark landed in DC, tons of CrimethInc. propaganda (produced for free at our local Kinko's) in the wings, it became clear that the work was to be done. A huge banner was being constructed in a haphazard fashion by a contingent of artists in the convergence center,

cut into the banner so people could see out of it, and then it began advancing. The police, not entirely sure what to do with the giant black thing reinforced with pipe advancing towards the street, just let it go. Soon the Bloc had occupied the street and began a relentless march towards the Building of the International Monetary Fund. The march made it to the monetary fund almost without incident, but as soon as it got there the police tried to hem us in and everyone feared a mass-arrest. The giant banner, having served its purpose as a giant police-repelling shield, was dismantled and, much to my surprise and joy, the various pieces of PVC piping were re-commissioned as cop-beating clubs. Escaping the grasp of the cops through a charge, I met up with my former lover who I had noticed earlier carrying the banner. I was overjoyed to see her; we split up from the main group of the protest and leisurely strolled over to the Food Not Bombs that was serving in Malcolm X park. Spending hours reminiscing with her, I completely lost track of time. As sun down approached, I ran to get my van from its parking spot...and it was gone!

I was horrified. Never being known as someone with an excellent memory for where I parked my car, I suspected that I had merely misplaced the old Shark. I patrolled the neighborhood, but nonetheless it became abundantly clear that the van was indeed missing. Seeing as I was currently living in the van, and that all my money was in the van, I was as stranded as any castaway. Not knowing what to and fuming with rage and confusion, I ran to the secret anarchist hideout, and, using the same phone that had been used as the legal support number the day before, called the police to report a missing car. They told me they would need to talk to me personally to file a report. Now, I had not changed out of traditional Black Bloc gear since the protest the day before. I had my steel-toe black combat boots on, a black hoodie, a black bandana, black fingerless gloves and black fatigues on. No 'anarchy' patches, but definitely not a normal citizen. Even worse, since I had been on the road for a few months, my hair had grown extremely wild and shaggy, and a scruffy beard had developed, along with a body odor that in most circles of society would identify me as homeless. Lastly, the anarchist painters' bloc that had painted the banner I had reinforced and held yesterday had used non-drying red paint on banner, leaving my hands a various parts of my body covered in a strange red substance. I wasn't sure how the cops would react to me. What if they recognized me from the Black Bloc the day before? And I sure didn't want them driving up to the not-so-entirely-secret anarchist hideout and ringing the doorbell. Panicking, I gave them the address of a building down the road and told them I would meet them outside.

In a few minutes, surreally enough, I was for the first time in my life being driven about in the front of a cop-car, not under arrest. In fact, the police officer was completely ignoring my appearance and smell and was instead cheerfully chatting to me about "those kids who steal your car, drive it around for a day, and park it right back..." After about an hour of driving about in cop car (mentally taking notes, having never been in the front seat of a DC cop car!), we finally surrendered and the cop wrote the car down as "stolen." In the pits of deepest despair, I went back to our anarchist secret hideout and began maniacally trying to figure out what I should do. What if the cops had stolen the car? After all, it was the banner-mobile, and maybe this meant the cops were looking for me? The behavior of the cop I had just met had been friendly enough; however, the many heads of the capitalist hydra sometimes



If we must raise a flag over our town, let it be black.

doesn't talk to each other, so maybe I had just been lucky. In a fit of complete paranoia, I called a friend from a desolate northern state and told him that my situation. In a spirit of complete generosity, he offered to buy me a plane ticket to his snow-bound home. Since September 11th, plane tickets had noticeably fallen in price, so a ticket to his place was actually about as expensive as the gas to get back to my small Southern stable. Not thinking through the possible advantages of hitch-hiking or train-hopping, or the obvious disadvantages one would face security-wise at the airport at this point, just wanting to go somewhere where I would be fed and housed indefinitely and off the map, I agreed to go.

As my friend dropped me off at Dulles airport, I immediately recognized this was a mistake. First, I was still in complete Black Bloc gear without anything except an ID and a

make decisions in ways that exclude women, etc.—come with us into our bands from the hierarchical world that raised us; let's make these bands social laboratories in which we learn how to break these patterns, in preparation for breaking that world.

Make Those Autonomous Zones Expandable!

Achieving supportive, non-hierarchical relations inside of your band is great, but it's not much use to the world unless it helps others do the same. Here we must address the role bands, even punk bands, play in the society of the spectacle.

Let us return to The Singer. Watching a band play, audience members tend to unconsciously identify themselves with the singer, the same way a spectator in a movie theater identifies with the hero on the screen, or a reader with the protagonist of a novel. This explains why so many people willingly shell out their hard-earned money for recordings of hip hop artists bragging about how much they earn from record sales—the listener identifies with the MC rather than as the victim of his money-making scheme, at least while the album is playing. This displacement of agency is at the root of the powerlessness of today's average Joe: the power to be creative is projected onto the successful novelist, the power to play sports onto the basketball star, the power to make history onto the politician.

The question for the anarchist musician is how to enable rather than disable listeners. That's tough, because what we're dealing with in the case of the punk band is a specialized, perhaps technically

proficient, group creating what is essentially a spectacle, a "show." Keeping these shows small-scale, so the performers and spectators can interact as individuals rather than only as people playing those roles, is one solution; creating performances that demand or provoke audience participation is another. Maintaining humility, and keeping your eyes on the prize of extending whatever powers you develop for yourself to everyone else, are essential. Ultimately our goal should be to make the punk community something like an extended open mic circle, in which everyone has a turn to receive attention for their creative efforts.

Finances

Capitalism plays into the division between artist and audience too, of course. A punk band trying to operate under capitalist conditions needs to have a clear analysis of the challenges they're up against, and which compromises they're willing to make, if they want to be anarchist in deed as well as word. That's why we punks have always tried to keep our record prices low and our door costs sliding-scale, and scorned the pursuit of mass popularity.

The aforementioned hip hop artists are not the only hip hop artists, of course; they're just the only ones who have time and other resources to focus on their art, since everyone else is too busy earning money to pay for food, housing, and—their records. We punks have developed an anti-consumerist, anti-rock-star ethic to ensure that a greater proportion of our numbers can engage in creative pursuits; but it's still expensive to buy, maintain, and transport conventional musical instruments, and that money has to come from somewhere.

Your band will need a collective fund to pay for this stuff. That fund will probably have to be started from a pool of your own private capital, and will hopefully come to sustain itself as you get established enough to break even. Try to resist the temptation to solve all your problems by making a lot of money off the band—remember, there's not all that much money in the punk scene, and the more of it you get, the less others have access to for their own projects and needs. You don't need to make a living off your band—you need to develop a lifestyle that enables you to play in it. Seek out other ways to meet your needs—dumpstering food, sharing living quarters, having fun playing music or writing graffiti instead of going to the movies. You'll probably need to make some money in short bursts of wage labor—medical studies, crop harvests, working and quitting, whatever—to pay for your needs and remain free to go on long tours.

It may seem crazy, voluntarily choosing poverty, perpetual uncertainty, exclusion from mainstream economic and social relations just to play music; in the bleak moments, it will feel like you've exiled yourself from the whole world for nothing. But you are investing in something that will pay off, too, something much more reliable than the material wealth of today's erratic market. You're building relationships, community, shared resources ("social capital")—the foundation for a good life no full benefits package could ensure.

Commitment

Commitment is the bedrock social capital is built on. When you give up all the false riches and reassurances of the capitalist nightmare, you'll

secret anarchist hideout were now completely sure I was mad; stumbling back into their house, which was currently engaged in a raging party featuring one of the locals rocking out the Smashing Pumpkins on acoustic guitar, I announced that the White Shark had returned! Determined to leave DC as soon as possible before the White Shark was either kidnapped or ran off yet again, I offered any of the plethora of traveling kids currently staying there a ride South if they so desired it. One dreadlocked hippie agreed, and as she jumped into the van, I suddenly realized that when I got back to my small Southern town, I had no place to stay...and hoped she might have an idea.

Whatever foul force had seized my car had cleaned out almost all of my personal possessions, but had in sloppy fashion left my 'Aesop Rock' tape in the cassette player. As we drove manically through the night, only the incessant mad poetry of hip-hop kept me vaguely sane. We rolled into my small Southern town, and I announced to the anarcho-hippie that not only did I have little funds, but that at four in the morning I could think of nowhere to spend the night...except the ruins of the old anarchist collective house mentioned at the



All dressed up with nowhere to go...

beginning of these tales. She agreed that it would be better to sleep outside in fresh air than in the van, so I drove down the dirty road to a house I hadn't seen in months. It looked like a wreck: the windows were smashed out, the ever-creeping kudzu had slowly taken over the much of the broken TVs and bikes and other strange junk that littered the front-yard, and the crazed house appeared to be barely standing, laying somewhere on the strange edge between reality and madness, between enchantment and accursedness. I parked, and walked up to its spray-painted walls: stabbed into the front door was a knife, with a strange note beneath it. The note said, in a scrawled hand-writing that seemed familiar: Here is the ruin of our house, a place where we tried to live the Revolution that we all want. We have all left, so please come in and make your

Reclaim the Streets breaks it down!



home. The hippie was absolutely shocked, having never seen an abode, even of anarchists, so utterly magical and yet utterly ruined. "It's like an magical anarchist hill-billy shack in the middle of nowhere..." I smiled and nodded. However, the inside of the house was so littered with broken fridge doors, yellowing books, and broken glass that we decided to climb upon the roof and sleep on top of it. From the roof, I looked down upon the valleys of kudzu that stretched out before me, and as the birds began to sing to greet the rising dawn, I felt implacably at home. I held her hand, and we fell into it, like a fever, like a dream.

The Shark Goes Back To Its Native Waters

Within a few months of losing everything, all our possessions, our lovers, our homes, our sanity, and nearly the rest of our lives to prison, Ishmael and I sat at a corporate bookstore drinking the finest of coffee and eating ridiculously decadent chocolate cakes. An atmosphere of doom prevailed. We always knew we had hit rock-bottom when we were at the corporate bookstore. Other people may drink forties on street corners, lay in their beds all night and cry, but we would always fall back upon the easiest of scams: stay up all day in the bookstore drinking bourgeois coffee, plotting the next step in our revolutionary schemes. Still, it was depressing. Yet, maybe it was the carrot cake, maybe it was the autobiography of Bill Ayers we were flipping through, maybe it was the double shot of espresso in my white chocolate mocha, but the conversation between Ishmael and I became exceedingly animated. So animated, in fact, that the strange, rotund black man with an elegant mustache who was sitting next to us turned around and said, "These people, these people," flipping his wrist at the yuppies and students sipping their lattes all around us, "these people do not interest me. But you, you interest me." Within minutes we were engaged in a conversation with someone who spoke not in mere sentences, but in well-crafted paragraphs with clear theses and dialectical development. The conversation soon turned from the depression of myself and Ishmael, to the grand heights of Kierkegaard and Aristotle, and then returned to ground itself in an analysis of the political economy of global capital. The man, named Sherlock, was originally from Jamaica, but had been educated among the ivory towers at Oxford, and for some ungodly reason had moved to the second circle of hell we called home to teach high school. It was amazingly reassuring, for it would have been almost impossible to imagine backgrounds more removed, yet this man clearly echoed our sentiments—capitalism, civilization itself, is sick and we're all headed straight towards apocalypse, it is the responsibility of ordinary people with the barest thread of decency to fight back with all their might, we must never, never surrender. There is hope, even in the lounges of soulless corporate bookstores, and there are allies in the most unlikely of places.

Inspired, the entire process began again. We picked out the largest, cheapest, most fucked up house we could find in town, and, through an act of sheer willpower, transformed it into an anarchist collective. While at first we were worried that we wouldn't be able to find enough anarchists to fill the house, soon there were more people living there than humanly possible—over twenty rocking people in every little nook and

corner, three of us (including myself) in the attic! The White Shark went mad, and my former home soon became the most rapacious and ruthless of thieves. Every night the White Shark would ride into the dark night, stomach empty, and return with all sorts of plunder. Anything that was not nailed to the ground was taken. Chairs, trashcans, cement, woods, nails, soil. We walked into the philosophy department at one of the local universities late at night, and, while no one was looking, grabbed a chalkboard right off the wall, fleeing down a fire escape into the ever-waiting maw of the White Shark. We would spend entire days prowling about the city, looking for strange items that our house needed, thinking of places to run scams, and then entire nights rolling about in the White Shark. The White Shark was a pirate ship, constantly moving from port to port, raiding the soft underbellies of suburbs for all they were worth. Within a few weeks, our collective house was well-stocked. We spent some time engaging in other adventures, starting bands, drinking and carousing, engaging in acts of personal drama and infighting. It soon became clear what this town and house needed more than anything else was not just survival against the capitalist machine—we needed to go on the offensive.

There we were, sitting in the living room of our collective, plotting the night away. There were, even in our most small and isolated of Southern towns, other anarchists, some quite formidable ones at that. The local kids had thought of the idea a number of years ago. We were going to have a Reclaim the Streets on the main shopping street of town, on the street where I myself had wasted my youth in drinking, begging for just another few dimes so I could bribe some local to get me a forty. The street that everyone hung out on, and cursed afterwards for offering "nothing to do." The street where everyone from the local businessmen to the cops knew us by name. It was a completely mad plan, but we have never denied being madmen and madwomen.

The White Shark began its nightly prowls yet again, searching the night for items that could be useful for a Reclaim the Streets. Paint, both for banners and faces, was stolen. Surgical strikes were conducted on party-favor stores, with noise-makers and costumes taken by force. Our friends working as employees at a warehouse of scrap cloth winked as we walked out without paying, helping us select the choicest scraps. Thousands of stickers and posters were printed by the good graces of the local university's lack of regard for printing quotas. Giant banners were constructed to redirect traffic, and huge poles of bamboo were cemented into plastic buckets to physically force the traffic. Other anarchists began spreading the news first by word of mouth, and then by wheat-pasting every square foot of the entire city with flyers proclaiming the upcoming "Street Party." Whispers, plots, schemes, allies were gathered, and before I knew it the anarchist collective house had stopped drinking and started buzzing with activity.

*Everybody throw your lighters up,
Tell me y'all gonna fight or what?
Everybody get your shit started...
It's y'all's motherfucking party!*

In an act of musical intervention, the Coup came to rock out the night before the Reclaim the Streets. Anarchists converged from the mountains, from the ruined industrial cities further up north, from the swamps to the east and from the soulless suburbs and tiny rural towns. The forces

While the last employee at the restaurant had been bright enough to lock the wine-cupboard, they had left a giant case of iced beer and liquor completely open. Inside, it was like a treasure trove of beers with strange German names and liqueurs the like of which people of my social class aren't even supposed to know! We quickly stuffed our pockets with cans of the finest beer and peppermint schnapps, only to realize that there was no way we could carry it all out. After peering out the door, all four of us scampered out of the hotel and to the van, unloading our liquor on the way. Personally, I began feeling a bit paranoid, and thought that maybe this act was taking it just a little too far, that now we were dealing in pure hubris. However, the first beer run had only whetted our appetites. Grabbing our backpacks, we meandered right back into the hotel, walking through the front door, straight into the bar, and began filling our rucksacks with alcohol. In we went, and out we went, and in again, and out again...until every last beer was gone! In an act that can only be considered complete chutzpah, we had stolen the IMF's beer!

As we loaded up the white shark and our one other vehicle with the beer, we came to the realization that we had no idea what to do with the excessive amount of alcohol we had just stolen. The White Shark, drunk off its latest victory, seemed to be smiling upon us. Suddenly, a member of our jolly crew had a brilliant idea: We should give out the beer free at Food Not Bombs! Although it would surely be breaking one of the bylaws of the International Network of Food Not Bombs®, anyone who had to spend their nights hungry in DC at least deserved a beer to keep them warm. We drove it back to our secret anarchist hideout in the depths of the Capital itself, and, as we opened the back door, one of our compatriots came stumbling out of bed, red dreadlocks flying. When he heard the idea, he grinned. It was going to be one hell of a Food Not Bombs. Some may call it stealing, but as every modern-day Robin Hood knows: it's not theft, it's redistribution of wealth.

Intermezzo

The relationship between the driver and her car is hard to understand. Relationship is a dry word, a word used by dating guides in cheap newspapers and half-hearted people who are afraid to commit themselves to anything greater than a life of romance novels bought at supermarkets. The love between a car and her driver is hard to understand. The lines between us and our methods of transportation become fuzzy, and we melt into our own machinery. No words can express my affection for the White Shark: it feels more like home to me than any house I've ever lived in, and my sleeping bag has more fond memories associated with it than any floor the world over. Words cannot describe the many nights I've spent living in her metal shell, never able to stretch fully out—so leading to my habit of curling up like a wolf even when I sleep in a bed¹. The White Shark transformed with me, from a respectable minivan in which a mother might drive her child to a soccer match, to a torn up, smelly, vengeful, dark vagabond of the night. The paint started chipping, the white began to be encrusted with dirt that no amount of washing could fix, strange liquids continually leaked from its shadowy crevices. The tape player, often the only thing holding my sanity together in the darkest hours of those nights, even that turned cannibal, eating the

tapes we put into it. Yet despite all her flaws, and perhaps because of them, I loved the White Shark. You can have your fancy red Mercedes, yuppie scum—I'd rather spend the night with my old dirty van any day of the week. Rich and arrogant bourgeoisie of the world, behold the White Shark! Behold your future executioner!

The effect the White Shark had upon its inhabitants was positively insidious. Nothing could describe the effect of watching ordinary people, disillusioned with crappy jobs or boring lives, jump into the van and, before my very own eyes, be transformed into anarchist warriors at the beck and call of any good cause within driving distance. At first it started out as petty theft, money for gas, a few bites of food. As the distances and the glorious heights of the plans increased, everyone in the belly of the Shark slowly got more grizzled, their bodies more gaunt, and the mad look of a pirate entered in their eyes. Defending tree-sits in Ohio, offering eco-defense workshops in poor neighborhoods in Baltimore, defending indigenous lands in the highlands of New York state, fighting for squats in Manhattan...the White Shark made me believe in knights errant again. When you needed us, you just needed to get in touch with one of the associates of the White Shark and the fucking cavalry would be there the next morning.

Cars, like friendships, need maintenance. And so I descended into the inner depths of my vehicle, exploring its nooks and crannies. I knew her limits and she knew mine. I also befriended an anarcho-mechanic, the father of one of the members of the Company of the White Shark, who helped me maintain her. He repaired the cars of all the local street kids and neighbors in his own garage, and for far less than any auto-shop. He knew all the shadiest auto-parts dealers in town, and all the honest ones as well, and his word was as good as gold. As I returned again and again, after strange adventure after even stranger adventure, we bonded over the White Shark. He would tell me tales of his adventures in New Orleans and Mexico, and I would tell him of stealing food from hotels in French Canada and fighting cops in Philly. He taught me what a gasket was, what weird part of some strange metal piece connected to some other piece. In between inspecting one weird problem of the White Shark after another, he would mutter things like "That Ariel Sharon's a bloody butcher..." Indeed, both the shaggy-haired anarchist and the auto-mechanic with a family in the outskirts of the city agreed that Western civilization was headed straight towards its doom, and the President George W. Bush was a madman at the helm of sinking ship. Because of these things, our anarcho-mechanic continued to repair the White Shark, and I continued to drive the distance with the wild beast. We hypothesized that the beast would keep on going until there was nothing left but a whirling engine, a dying transmission, and a rusty metal frame, and then I would drive her into the ocean, lighting her on fire and giving her a proper Viking funeral.

In the Hands of Our Enemies

The White Shark is a wild beast, and while I may recount some of its nefarious adventures here, I can only recount those I know of. For the White Shark has been on many adventures that even I, its monomaniacal Captain, don't know of.

¹ Editor's note: Only in punk rock circles can you find people who approach sleeping as an extreme sport!



The Transcontinental Killing Spree

The problem with having sprawling adventures is that, when they are complete, you are left with no option but to surpass yourself, to make even wilder plans involving even more impossibilities, even more undiscovered continents in which to plant the black flag. As we sat in our musty attic, we laid down an atlas. Earlier, a mysterious old woman had approached me as I was repairing computers in the local infoshop, and offered a simple proposition:

were surrounded, with the crowd yelling "Shame!" and "Let him go!" The cops, terrified with their backs against the wall, began reacting with brutality against the festive party-goers, swinging clubs and releasing pepper spray. The crowd stormed up to the cops, and chaos ensued. Before anyone knew what was happening, the local Indymedia reporter was thrown against a police car, screaming. It was completely mad. Local hoodlums who had spent years dodging the cops while trying to hustle a bit of green were now throwing down with the pigs, grabbed and kicking. Acts of both extreme heroism and cowardice were taking place—women kicked cops twice their size as they charged at them, young men kicked themselves free of cops' clutches, crowds yelled and terrified the police, police reacted by pepper-spraying innocent young children. In the chaos, a friend of mine ran up and grabbed the Indymedia video camera that was still running. As the madness engulfed the street, our little quiet town was filled with the closest thing it had seen to a riot in years. As the cops fled the scene with our sisters and brothers in the backs of their paddy-wagons, one member of the crowd took initiative and, black flag of anarchy held high, began marching the entire party straight to the prison. The cops, by attempting to stop the Reclaim the Streets, had caused the crowd to do exactly what they had most feared—the march to the prison had shut down downtown.

As the crowd rallied outside, the cops inside the prison panicked, and one by one our compatriots were released. Fifteen arrests, one felony. The Reclaim the Streets had been both far greater than our expectations and far worst than our nightmares. We had never wanted our brothers and sisters to go to prison, and the White Shark began to creep away, to retrieve from a downtown that the poles, the banner, the stereo, all the evidence. All the evidence must be destroyed. Yet for one moment, the impossible, the marvelous had broken loose. In the most unlikely of desolate Southern towns, for absolutely no better reason than "we could," we, with no spokesperson, no message, and no leaders, had brought to life the biggest party ever seen. The media was utterly baffled. We had brought down the house, and with it the Police Chief and the feelings of despair that had choked these streets for our entire lives. It was a breath of fresh air—and it hurt.

the Zapatistas needed computers, and all I had to do was to gather them and get them Chiapas. A simple plan, and as Ishmael and I sat discussing it, it became abundantly clear we had many other things to do as well—protest global financial institutions, eco-defense on the West Coast, meet friends at yet another Earth First! Rendezvous...so like the professional composers of adventures we were, we strung together harmonies of actions, triads of locations, rhythms of travels. Trainhopping across the northernmost wastes of Canada, hitchhiking up and down the West Coast...driving the White Shark up and down the East Coast, and then to the fucking Lacondon Jungle! Yes, we were going to criss-cross the entire fucking continent of North America, from Alaska to Chiapas and everywhere in between, with no stops, no holds barred, no gods and no masters. Such a journey could only deserve one name: The Transcontinental Killing Spree.

We offered seats to anyone who wanted to come along, although the ability to speak Spanish was preferred. Only one mysterious e-mail from a professional adventurer named Hibb on the West Coast answered us in the affirmative. The White Shark was getting weary. We had put on tens of thousands of miles on its already straining hold. Everything was breaking down, bit by bit. Radiators in Texas, fuel pumps, everything except the core of engine and transmission. Deep in my heart, I still felt that the White Shark was going to make it this time...though the White Shark's transmission was making a high-pitched whistle that could be its death-knell, we still had our own mission, and the White Shark had not a mere mortal engine of gears and oil, but an engine of pure destruction. I took it by the anarcho-mechanic for one last check-up. Oil changed, tires rotated, filters placed in, new gaskets. The White Shark was readied for its final and most glorious ride.

Our merry band had to drive across the entire country, dumpster-dive some computers, and then take the White Shark and drive the electronics to Chiapas. Nothing could be easier. There were problems, the first being not having any computers. Never to let something as dreary as reason curb our enthusiasm, we began to pray to the ever-shifty patron spirits of thieves and hobos to deliver unto us computers. As soon as we began to seek the computers, they

incarnated themselves in answer to our prayers. A group of semi-professional activists were willing to donate some old computers they had been given by a non-profit group that trained home-free² folks to build computers. Of course, by the time we sorted this out, we were in eastern Canada and they were on the West Coast. Without fear, a brave fellowship of companions rose to the occasion to get there and bring them to Mexico. With little in the way of possessions, no money (as usual), and absolutely no grasp on the fundamentals of rational planning, we hopped trains across the coldest reaches of Canada, reaching the West Coast by surviving purely on one large pack of oats. Arriving on the West Coast, we promptly gave away our oversized bag of oats to an indigenous family that was hitch-hiking to Seattle to see the world. Not just traveling kids, but a traveling family.

We picked up the computers from the non-profit, and then realized to our dismay that we, without a car, had no way to transport them down the street, much less to Chiapas. Again, our lack of planning seemed to doom us! We couldn't carry them by hand to Chiapas, and the White Shark we were hoping to drive there was taking a brief respite in the woods of Maine, on the other side of the United States. Luckily, a group of anarcho-primitivists were passing across the West Coast on a tour to promote the destruction of civilization, and, although we reasoned that computers were surely included under the category of civilization, we asked for help anyways. After all, the computers were for guerrillas! Despite the irony of the situation, the anarcho-primitivist gang was more than willing to help the Zapatistas, and strapped the computers to the top of their van that was driving to Texas, taking them with them one step closer to Chiapas. In search of our long-lost White Shark, we got a ride across the country in yet another heroic automobile known only as the Duster, funded purely by an orgy of gas-thievery and, by last estimate, over a thousand dollars in scams, until our ragged crew—fueled by a bizarre combination of stale pizza dough and organic energy bars—returned to the fair woods of Maine. After nearly a month vacation, and against all odds, the White Shark revved up again, loaded with even more computers from a shady inside job at a major Washington, D.C. corporation, and began its slow journey to Texas, getting in two major breakdowns and one near wreck, almost flipping due to the amount of computers loading it. One of the computers was even bartered to a car mechanic in rural Georgia for a used axle!

The problem of the border presented itself as nearly insurmountable. After all, you're not supposed to truck a vanload of computer parts into a foreign country and not expect to have questions asked by the border guards. But within a few weeks, the primitivists dropped off the computers, a group of Quakers funneled them to a friendly church, who then, in collaboration with an autonomist sweatshop workers' union, maneuvered them across the border without a problem. Computers in tow, we drove to Chiapas triumphant. The truly remarkable feat was that we, who had no resources besides our unemployment and mania, had, with the aid of the legend of the Zapatistas, helped create through mutual aid a network of friends that crossed an entire continent, a network of as diverse backgrounds and ideas as imaginable, a network ranging from young balaclava-clad anarcho-primitivists to middle-aged Mexican sweatshop wage slaves and elderly Christian pacifists: a network

of friends capable of doing the impossible for an armed indigenous rebellion.

The drive to Mexico City was, even by the high standards of the White Shark, a new record in non-stop driving. Our new friend from the West Coast created a magical talisman for the tiburnon blanco. Ishmael took it upon himself to merge his body and soul with the machinery of the White Shark. Coffee in one hand and wheel in the other, he drove without rest through deserts, through the megapolis of Mexico City, right through all possible physics of time and distance. It became hard to tell who was really driving, the White Shark or Ishmael, or if there was any difference between the two. Our anarcho-mechanic had regaled us with tales from his youth of being stopped on the Mexico byroads and having all his money stolen by bandits, and even our shoplifted *Let's Go Mexico* warned us of two guerrilla armies (the ERP and ERPI, although most likely defunct in my opinion) operating in southern Mexico. Not surprisingly, the only real bandits we encountered on our journey were the cops. Cops in Mexico are even more blatantly corrupt than those in the States: they will just pull you over, vaguely complain about the hassle they would have to face in writing a whole ticket out for whatever your fictional offense was, and suggest you just give them the dineros right there so they can "forget" about the matter. Bribes in hand, funded by medical experiments to which we had sold ourselves, we passed without incident through both shady encounters with the police (although once we used furniture to blockade ourselves in the union base where we were sleeping, due to fear of police reprisal!) and even military checkpoints. Dressed in our finest possible tourist clothes, we were always "going to see the ruins," which just happened to be in the middle of Chiapas. To be honest, the fiercest threat the White Shark faced was the danger of the infamous Mexican speed-bump, the topez. While speed-bumps in the States seem to be mainly aimed at slowing a vehicle down, in Mexico the topez is designed to stop the vehicle by whatever means necessary. The White Shark vibrated as its undersides were torn and grimaced as its speed was suddenly stolen from it, but, resolve unshaken, plowed ever onwards towards whatever fate awaited us in the jungle.

Once in Chiapas, the White Shark broke all the rules of safe driving. It was finally among equals, for the Mexicans in the mountains had just as much a deathwish as the Shark did. Flying up and down mountains, through rain and mist, through darkest night and with barely any gas, the White Shark never rested. Zapatista children would peer from around corners at the strange internationals and their white steed, and would draw strange pictures in the dust that stood on the White Shark's windows. We found ourselves driving down roads with no names, to deliver strange aids to Zapatista villages which, in acts of cartographic imperialism, the government refused to put on the map, due to their refusing to acknowledge the mal gobierno. Once, while standing outside at the gates of a Zapatista village to track the movements of military, I tried to explain to one of the Zapatistas (who was busily scrawling down military truck numbers on his hand as I wrote my notes down on a pad of paper) where we were from and how the tiburon blanco had transported us in. My shaky knowledge of Mexican geography, combined with his lack of knowledge of the geography of United States, led to me scrawling in the dirt a giant map of the Western Hemisphere and mapping out the adventures of the White Shark. As we swapped stories in a

²For those who don't know, "home-free" is the politically correct term for those the capitalists call "homeless."

strange pigeon mixture of Tzotzil, Spanish, and English of fighting cops and neoliberal globalization from the farm fields of Chiapas to the streets of the Capital, he smiled and told me that if the military stopped threatening his land and the mal gobierno was destroyed, he and his children would jump in the belly of the Shark and visit us in the States.

Words cannot express my awe of what the Zapatistas have done. While Marcos and the balaclavas are definitely sexy, the real strength of the Zapatistas lies in their autonomous and self-organized communities. Everything we anarchists in the States only talk about, the Zapatistas have actually been doing—shared land for community farming, free schools teaching revolutionary history in which the pupils help design the curriculum, hospitals based on natural remedies, preventive medicine, and everyday health, amazing food, coffee, and art co-operatives. And not a single fucking cop. Hell, the police and the tax collectors weren't even allowed in the village—yet I felt safer in Zapatista villages than I do on the streets of any city in the States. The warmth and kindness of the Zapatistas, despite their poverty and the continual threat of attack by the military, radiates and fills their villages with an atmosphere that can only be described as enchanted. Although I barely could speak their language, I felt strangely at home behind the giant black and red gates of the Zapatista villages. So different, yet so similar to what we are trying to do in the States. Giant murals of balaclavas mixed with the huge mustache of Zapata, the circle 'A' mixed with Mexican flags and indecipherable Mayan symbols, everywhere children, chickens, and scruffy dogs. It even smelled like some of the wilder collective houses we had back home, but on a scale that we could never have possibly imagined in our wildest dreams. If people ever tell me that anarchy can't work, I'll just tell them to get in a car and drive four days south, and see revolution with their own eyes.

As if emerging from a dream, it came to us that we had to leave Chiapas and return to our home in States. After all, despite the temptation to live the revolution with these mountain folks, we had to continue our own struggle amidst our own people. Besides, Ishmael had a court case coming up. The White Shark began its final ride home, and we looked on a map and saw what appeared to be large highway straight to Minatchitlan from Tuxtla, the capital of Chiapas. So off the White Shark went, bidding fond farewell to the free air of the Zapatistas, and down the highway. We should have expected trouble as we entered the highway, as a large toll or military blockade (somewhat hard to tell the difference in Mexico) had been set up, but we drove right through it without pause, leaving only the guard with only a confused stare. We drove miles and miles, completely alone on the road, upon what appeared to be the finest road in Mexico. As the sun set behind the mountains, we found the situation to be strangely eerie...yet the road continued ever onwards. Or so we thought.

Out of nowhere, a giant lake appeared on the horizon, and the road went right into the lake! Throwing on the brakes, we realized that the Mexican government had been optimistic in placing this particular highway on the map. Not knowing what else to do, we turned around and drove back to Tuxtla, sorrowfully noting that we had wasted a whole day driving on a road to nowhere. As darkness set in, the poor White Shark starting having the automobile equivalent to the tremors before a heart attack. The overheating of the engine is a dread phenomena in all cars, in which, rumor has it, the engine can

be utterly destroyed, so we pulled off to the side of the road and let the White Shark simmer down. The White Shark simmered a bit, but when we starting driving again, the air conditioner mysteriously stopped functioning. Then, after a few more minutes, the engine started over-heating again and, to our increasing horror, the lights went off. We pulled off to the side of the road, and let the White Shark rest again. When we started the White Shark once more, it made it a few yards to a nearby gas station, and suddenly, in a truly surreal moment, the gauges all started moving backwards. The speed, the heat of the engine, everything starting going to zero before our very eyes. The engine refused to inject fuel, and, paralyzed with shock, we coasted into a gas station that was full of cops wielding giant machine guns. We quickly backed into a strange parking spot, and then opened the hood to see if we could deduce what was going on. The heat coming from the White Shark's insides was scalding. We opened the oil tank—it was fucking empty! We ran into the station and began desperately pouring oil into the White Shark, trying to revive her. It worked—we restarted the engine, and the White Shark's lights came miraculously back on. Yet, we drove it only a few yards from the gas station, and in utter exhaustion, the White Shark collapsed again, dead. Quaking in terror and avoiding looking the cops in the eye, we walked into the gas station and pleaded with them to let us stay the night. Confused, the clerks merely shrugged and smiled. We got the White Shark back into the gas station parking lot. Ishmael looked me in the eye, and said "You know, I normally try to stay hopeful with these things, but I bet fifty to one the White Shark is dead." I nodded in somber agreement. How were we going to get rid of the corpse? I didn't even have legal registration! Our options were limited, we were thousands of miles away from home (no, wait, we had no homes), and the only way to dispose of the White Shark was to drive it off a fucking cliff. In bleak despair, I told Ishmael that a captain always has to go down with the ship, as I fell asleep in the driver's seat.

In the morning, we woke up and had one final idea. We were going to call the hometown anarcho-mechanic. We went to the nearest payphone and called him, and described the symptoms. He mulled over it, and within seconds came up with a diagnosis for the White Shark. Over the length of a thousand miles, his wise words told me to open the hood and see if our engine belt was still there. Putting down the phone, I walked over, followed his advice, and—behold, the anarcho-mechanic was right! It was just missing, it must have fallen off somewhere on the highway! Apparently, once the belt fell off, the engine couldn't work the alternator, so one by one everything inside the White Shark died as the battery drained. Leaping in joy, I heaped a million blessings upon our dearest anarcho-mechanic, and walked down the highway until we found, surrounded by vicious barking dogs, a tiny little automechanic shop. A man who resembled nothing more than a Mexican leprechaun emerged, and as we explained the problem to him as best we could, he smiled and drove us back to the beached White Shark in his truck. He jumped inside the metallic bowels of the White Shark, and after some messing around, attached what appeared to be giant rubber band correctly to the engine. We restarted the engine, drove it around for a test drive, and received a final wink as we handed him twenty dollars worth of pesos. The White Shark was back on the road—it's crooked grill, positioned over a crooked bumper, smiling a wicked shark smile.

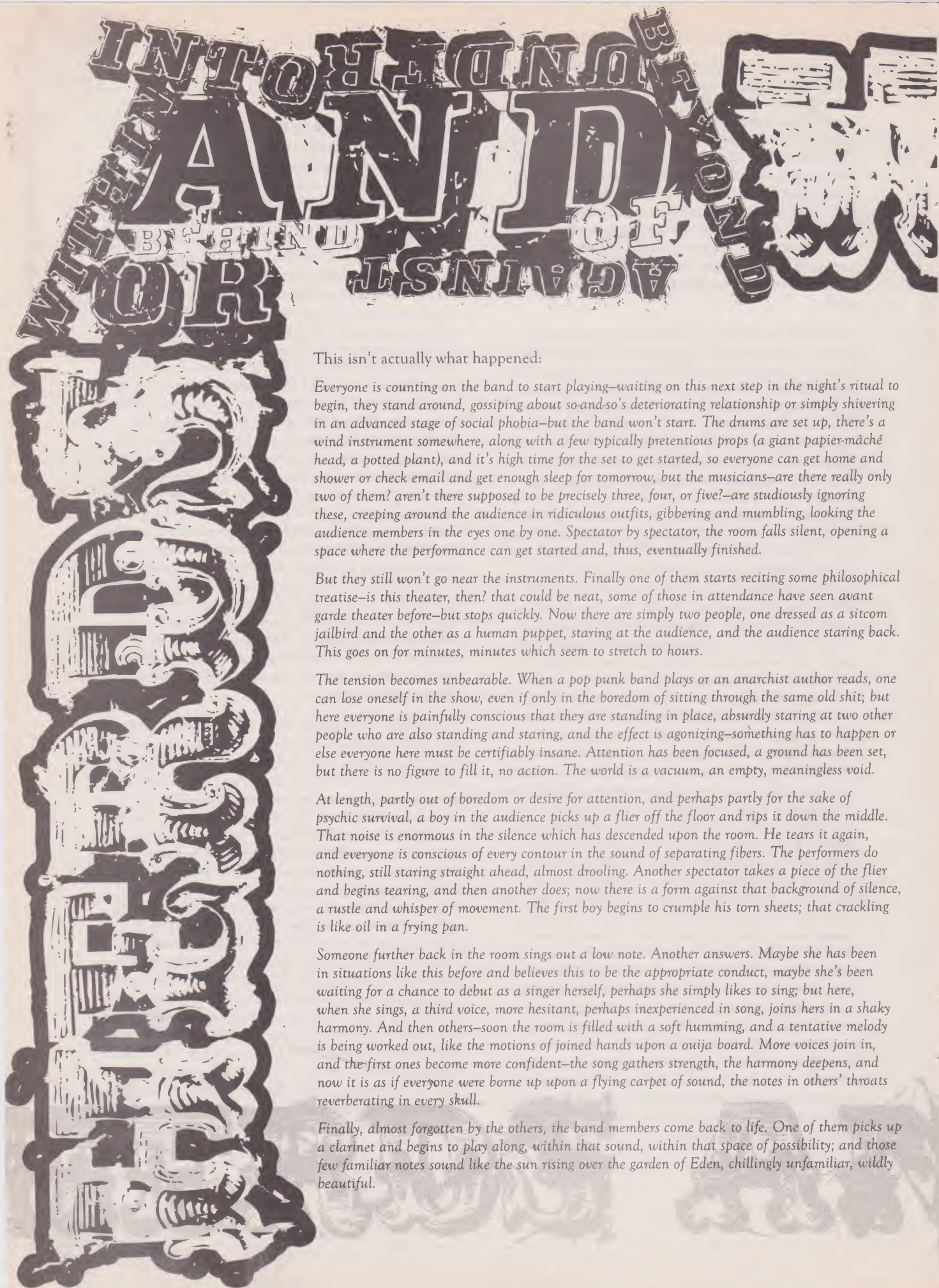
Back on the road, we did a maniacal drive straight back to the States, matching in furious intensity our earlier trip. Our funds slowly dissolved, and eventually I was left with barely enough blood money to make it back to my hometown; Ishmael had only a single dollar to his name. After recrossing the border without incident, I dropped Ishmael, Hibb, and our brave and intrepid translator (who had jumped into the White Shark at a moment's notice on the West Coast, and whose services had proved invaluable) at the Greyhound bus-station. We all hugged, and, looking each other straight in the eye, Ishmael and I promised each other that we would meet again for even further adventures. I felt like I was losing my family, and as we bid each other farewell, I felt strangely alone.

As I drove the now-empty White Shark on the final leg of its trip, the anniversary of September 11th rolled around. The radio waves were jammed with our so-called President's hate-filled and patriotic speeches cursing our enemies and proclaiming our "freedom," songs about attacking innocent countries, and flag-waving. The radio stations, ever ignorant, began playing "Born of the Fourth of July." These war-hungry madmen filled the airwaves with their calls for vengeance from their comfortable chairs in the White House, pasty bureaucrats whose children would never die in a war, plump God-fearing politicians who feel no guilt for raining hellfire onto families in the name of security and a quick buck. Their hypocrisy stank to the high heavens. At least the murderous Al-Qaeda had the courage to fly the plane into the World Trade Center themselves instead of pushing buttons from behind a screen. I struck back the only way I could, with an act of kindness towards a stranger. A grizzled hobo stood beside the highway in Alabama, thumb proudly stuck up in the air. So, tired and sick from caffeine, I picked up the man, who jumped in White Shark's belly. He gave me a cracked smile, and before long we were chatting up storms, telling story after story. It was like a Thousand and One American Nights, each one of us telling stories like our very lives depended on it—which they did, since these stories were the only thing keeping me awake as we headed inevitably north. The strange hobo, twice my age at least, started telling stories of fishing, of growing up in the wilds of rural Louisiana, of his stint in the military. Slowly, it came out that we both hated the government with the intense passion that most people reserve for their lovers and family, and we loved our lovers and family with a love that most people reserve for God. The hobo had a child in Virginia he wanted to visit, and I had my own tribe in my small, Southern hometown that I missed as well. Finally, too exhausted to drive any more, I pulled off to a deserted rest station in Mississippi, and, as the crickets chirped away, the hobo took a bottle of whiskey out of his tattered rucksack, the White Shark's lights dimming as I turned the engine off. I took a sip to calm my tattered nerves. I began thinking of new adventures, new horizons, new chances to fight for everything I held precious in this world. Yes, the White Shark had to retire with the anarcho-mechanic, if only for a time. But she would ride again. As the traveler and myself sipped whiskey in the warm Southern night, we promised each other that we would hold onto our stories. We would never forget.

And Nocturnes

In the end, the power of capitalism does not lie in its ability to make us be still. Stillness, a certain measure of quiet and solitude, is needed. Some things can only be done in one place. Some communities are too big to fit in the back of van. Hell, sometimes all your band equipment won't even fit in your van! A van has limits. It is merely an enclosed square of steel, fueled by a vicious combination of modern technology and ancient fossils that will surely have no fate other than causing the utter destruction of life on this planet. Yes, automobiles are evil. But how can we look ourselves straight in the eye and call ourselves "revolutionary" unless there is no evil that we cannot subvert, no means we cannot turn towards our ultimate ends? How can we call ourselves free if we cannot carry the stillness we need inside of ourselves, if we cannot find it wherever we lay our heads and plant our feet? The answers to our woes are not movement or technology. It's not that freedom happens to you. No, freedom is something that happens because of you: Freedom is something you live, you act, you do. It's both as possible and impossible as getting that real fucking crazy plan—the one that no one would ever believe you capable of—in your head and doing it. In a twisted way, it is moving that even in America, a land of unending horizons paved with highways of gold and fueled by the blood of the world, a teetering architecture built to collapse beneath our wheels, a van can be a vessel of freedom. If even a lowly automobile can become the leaky raft of a castaway band of escaped wage-slaves, we must ask: where are other underground railroads, other avenues of escape, other possibilities of freedom, other vessels of adventures? Our civilization is an anachronism, or, as one of our favorite bands sings: a speeding car, and nobody's driving! Unless we seize the wheel...

...Which may be impossible. There is a good possibility that's true. Maybe nothing we can do could ever save this world, and we're all fucking doomed. But must we only accept our imminent demise? Let us love our doom. With all faith in the future lost, anything becomes possible now. We can make love in the back of dingy car-vans, eat rotten vegetables from filthy hands, make mockery of their laws, steal beer from international bankers and give it to the homeless to offer them the warm nights our so-called civilization won't, throw tear gas back at cops—and when the canisters run out, throw donuts!—lie, cheat, steal, fuck, and do it all over again, but this time when they aren't expecting it! Hold each other's hands as we sweat from our darkest fears, kiss tenderly beneath the dying birch trees, cry flash-floods of tears that we've been holding back all these years, and drive until motherfucking dawn. When the sun rises, and the first rays fall upon the endless horizon, our futures are painted in colors that we never even dreamed of in the night, and the fate of the White Shark becomes apparent. The van is not to be confused with us, our smiles, our memories, our skins, our flesh, our bone, our sweat and our lives. The vessel is only the backdrop, a thread to hang stories together with. We are alive, and we're not going down with the ship. Not tonight.



This isn't actually what happened:

Everyone is counting on the band to start playing—waiting on this next step in the night's ritual to begin, they stand around, gossiping about so-and-so's deteriorating relationship or simply shivering in an advanced stage of social phobia—but the band won't start. The drums are set up, there's a wind instrument somewhere, along with a few typically pretentious props (a giant papier-mâché head, a potted plant), and it's high time for the set to get started, so everyone can get home and shower or check email and get enough sleep for tomorrow, but the musicians—are there really only two of them? aren't there supposed to be precisely three, four, or five?—are studiously ignoring these, creeping around the audience in ridiculous outfits, gibbering and mumbling, looking the audience members in the eyes one by one. Spectator by spectator, the room falls silent, opening a space where the performance can get started and, thus, eventually finished.

But they still won't go near the instruments. Finally one of them starts reciting some philosophical treatise—is this theater, then? that could be neat, some of those in attendance have seen avant garde theater before—but stops quickly. Now there are simply two people, one dressed as a sitcom jailbird and the other as a human puppet, staring at the audience, and the audience staring back. This goes on for minutes, minutes which seem to stretch to hours.

The tension becomes unbearable. When a pop punk band plays or an anarchist author reads, one can lose oneself in the show, even if only in the boredom of sitting through the same old shit; but here everyone is painfully conscious that they are standing in place, absurdly staring at two other people who are also standing and staring, and the effect is agonizing—something has to happen or else everyone here must be certifiably insane. Attention has been focused, a ground has been set, but there is no figure to fill it, no action. The world is a vacuum, an empty, meaningless void.

At length, partly out of boredom or desire for attention, and perhaps partly for the sake of psychic survival, a boy in the audience picks up a flier off the floor and rips it down the middle. That noise is enormous in the silence which has descended upon the room. He tears it again, and everyone is conscious of every contour in the sound of separating fibers. The performers do nothing, still staring straight ahead, almost drooling. Another spectator takes a piece of the flier and begins tearing, and then another does; now there is a form against that background of silence, a rustle and whisper of movement. The first boy begins to crumple his torn sheets; that crackling is like oil in a frying pan.

Someone further back in the room sings out a low note. Another answers. Maybe she has been in situations like this before and believes this to be the appropriate conduct, maybe she's been waiting for a chance to debut as a singer herself, perhaps she simply likes to sing; but here, when she sings, a third voice, more hesitant, perhaps inexperienced in song, joins hers in a shaky harmony. And then others—soon the room is filled with a soft humming, and a tentative melody is being worked out, like the motions of joined hands upon a ouija board. More voices join in, and the first ones become more confident—the song gathers strength, the harmony deepens, and now it is as if everyone were borne up upon a flying carpet of sound, the notes in others' throats reverberating in every skull.

Finally, almost forgotten by the others, the band members come back to life. One of them picks up a clarinet and begins to play along, within that sound, within that space of possibility; and those few familiar notes sound like the sun rising over the garden of Eden, chillingly unfamiliar, wildly beautiful.

HERDS AND WORDS

The performer who would abdicate his role and depose himself, destroying and activating the audience in the process, is analogous to the anarchist who strives to ignite a self-managing revolution. The artist who would cast off the entire history of art to make a moment with no inertia, no influence, is analogous to the mystic who would, by means within this world, depart to experience other worlds.

A song is descended from the music its composer has heard her whole life like a poem is from the language the poet has spoken: it is made up of terms, i.e. sounds that can be identified as music because they have appeared in others' compositions. The combinations work because of the history shared by the musicians and the listeners.

To make an alien music, one must...

But wait, perhaps that's not what Herds and Words are trying to do at all.

Inside Front: Let's start with your name, Herds and Words. Where does that come from?

John: Well, words—that's what we first found we had in common, playing with words. I would do that with my brother,

before—just say words, pass them back and forth, see what developed.

Robert: And herds—we met when we were both working as cashiers, and all the people coming in and out—herds.

J: That's something in German—das Herden.

IE: Is that a term that represents a particular concept?

J: Just—herds. People.

R: We were cashiers.

IE: So let me ask—it seems to me, what's happened at the last two shows, that what you're trying to do is to make moments—

R: Make moments? We're not gods, we're not special. The moments are already there.

J: Yeah...

IE: OK, I understand—but I guess, in my case at least, to be really in those moments is another thing entirely. Often I feel like the history of the world, and my own history, is all one great obstacle to recognizing the possibilities of a moment and really experiencing it. If I don't do something to jerk myself out of the chain of events and routine that's already in place, I'll just end up experiencing the same things, on autopilot, default setting. I think that's the secret of what's going on in a lot of situations—punk shows, dances, special events in every circle of society: people make these unreal moments happen just by bringing their expectations that something will happen, something magical... and

those expectations, that projected energy, is enough to make it take place.

R: OK, yeah.

IE: So is what you're doing about your experience, or the experience of the people at the show? Do you think about what you want to make people feel, or just about getting yourself to that place, just about what you're feeling?

R: Well, we don't talk a lot about what we're going to do—

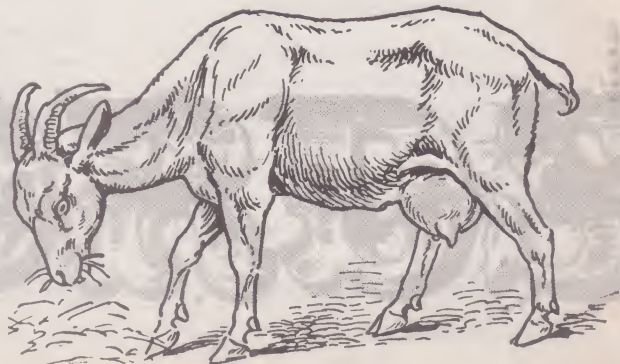
J: —Like, just before we start, I'll say a sentence, and that sentence will be what we do—

R: —Or I'll say that I'm going to tell a story, and then just start... telling.

J: For me, I follow what I'm feeling, and I look for vibrations from other people, and... like at that show here in Olympia, the other night, I just had my eyes closed, and I was making my way through the people, and I found that guy, and we were speaking nonsense back and forth, just like:

“BSFIEWNWWW!”

And I had my eyes closed, which helps—like, I had my eyes closed, and I was totally there, but when I opened them for a second, he was looking right at me, speaking nonsense, and I wasn't quite there the same way, so I closed them.



IE: I think things like that, like closing your eyes, or dimming the lights or setting up the equipment or whatever, can be things we do to disconnect from 'normal' reality, to set the stage so something else can happen. To get together in a dark room, late at night, and close our eyes and dance and scream together, that's one thing—but to be able to create that same feeling, at eleven a.m. by the checkout line in the supermarket, that's another thing altogether... So how much does what happens at a show depend on the audience? Totally?

J: Yeah.

R: Well, we don't... we're not playing in a vacuum, like most—I don't want to say most bands, but a lot of performances you see, you see something from the past that they've put together in their town, in their space, and then they bring that product, and play it for people. We work with the environment that people—

J: —or even just driving into the city, like how we drove into South Dakota—

R: —Pierre—

J: —and having the meal before the show there, everything led up to what happened...

IE: What happened there?

R: Wait, this isn't Pierre, this is Olympia... but this is an example of what we're talking about. Here, we talked beforehand about a part: "we'll play this section, bass clarinet and drums, and then we'll stop and hum the same tune that the bass clarinet is playing in the first part." In our minds, or at least in mine but I'm pretty sure it was collective, in our heads it was just: we play that part, we sing that part, John and I, and we do it for a while, see how it feels, and then go into the next part. But the audience, the people there took over, and totally transformed what was happening, joined in, and made it—

IE: That was the best part, for me—suddenly the whole room was alive.

that, I'm not conscious of that. When we play, for me—we start, and then we're done. I forget most what happens.

J: Yeah—all of it.

R: John and I talk afterwards, and he might remember a part, and relate it to me, and I'll be like "Oh yeah! I forgot about that!"

IE: Is that a good thing?

R: It's an amazing thing. It's something outside of just our selfish selves.

IE: I've always thought about that—you know, the worst moments of my life I can remember, crystal clear, but the best ones are all blurry, opaque. What's going on when you're living without memory? Does that mean you're totally present in the moment, or does it just mean you're in a trance state? Or does it mean—

J: Nothing.

R: For me it's like, I don't want to say refuge, but it's a different place that feels totally natural, because it is of the moment. If someone else does join in, it's like a bonus, it's on top of that—because already I'm satisfied with playing, and doing it, and that's enough.

J: How could you expect something if you want something new? I try to stay away from intentions, to not want anything... except for just, strap it on, strap on my bass clarinet and just...

R: It's not good or bad, it just is.

IE: I have a question. Have you ever done something like this without it being a show, without fliers and stuff? Have you ever walked into a supermarket at eleven

in the morning with your bass clarinet: "All right, this next hour is going to be one I won't remember!"

R: I can say—not with a bass clarinet, er, for me... but, without instruments, we'll have moments where we're just sitting in the van and, I don't want to say freak out, but we just get into life and it's, it would be as if you were watching us perform.

IE: Now is that a way of living, of experiencing life that you think can be extended past minutes into hours, into days?

R: When someone sees us doing that on the street, they're not willing to accept it because of whatever social constrictions they have, so they're not open to... the nonsense. But if you see it in a forum where people go to watch something, they are more open to it, and it turns into a ball from there—and whatever they get from it, is theirs.

IE: So do you feel like there's a difference between shows you play where people are open to what you're doing and respond, and ones where they don't? You can't plan for the unexpected, but you can think about the effects, about different situations. What's the difference, for example, between performing in Des Moines [at the convergence of the CrimethInc. flying circus tours, August 2001] for a bunch of ready-to-go crazy motherfuckers, and then in another place where people are less open?

J: In Des Moines, we still didn't expect anything but anybody, but... going back to our beginning, when we first started playing, we just had music, and we'd play it, we had a set—we might have improvised

a little, but we didn't run around the audience. As we've gone on, we've lost our expectations of what we could do...

IE: You've been trying to shake off expectations?

J: It just happened.

R: It was just music, when we started.

IE: You were "just a band"?

R: No, you know I never believed in that word! But it started with us playing in the basement... it was always loose, there was always a level of improvisation, but in everything else—the words that we say, the actions that we do when we play, it's all like our lives becoming more a part of this—having it be less of a performance, and more of... the world.

J: Yeah, I can think of one time we played in North Carolina—Raleigh—we had this set, and we played it through, and then we lost each other at the end—and all of a sudden we just stared at each other, like this, for a long time. We were both waiting for one of us to come back into it, to get back into it so afterwards we could say "OK, we played that part"... but we just ended up staring at each other, and it just turned into us messing around, and we started laughing as hard as we could, and that turned into... It just grew into something like: we could laugh at ourselves when we're playing in front of people, I can say "oh, this sucks, we're outta here, we're not a band—what are you doing, why are you looking at us?" So that's how it's grown. We lost expectations of ourselves being musicians, and of people being audiences...

SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

R: On a side note, New York City was one of the best shows that we've played. I didn't know how it was going to go beforehand, either... but it was the first show that I can remember the audience, people there besides me and John, totally clapping and ... like, I was playing the drums, and my high hat came undone. I was still keeping time on the rim of the snare, and I looked at the person standing next to me, watching, and he was already nodding his head to the beat, so I was like "Clap! Clap! Just clap!" He started to clap, and then the next person, and then the next thing you know everyone's clapping. I just put down the drumsticks and jumped up and yelled "Yeah!" You know, I totally forgot about that instant... right now to then is connected in the weird world, that we don't see.

IF: So, talking about that world... going to that place that you can go there for an hour and you come back unable to remember anything, or you go there for—what seems like five days... Is that a sustainable place? Is that a place to try to be, more? Can you attach any kind of value to it, to going there?

J: If you start to think about it too much, it won't come...

IF: Like the story of the goose and the golden eggs.

R: I'm not even saying it's real, I'm not saying anything. Just because I'm talking about it doesn't mean it's a real thing. I mean, it could be—but I'm not going to say.

IF: Stuff that you've done yourselves, to surprise yourselves, to shake off your own expectations of what's going to happen—have you experienced that you try something like that, and it works, and then it stops working?

R: You know, level of expectation... some people might think: you have this crazy thing, this wild thing, this extreme thing, and the only way to defeat it is to keep going and making it crazier and wilder. But the way that we've been handling it... it isn't necessarily a reaction against that, but—creating a balance. Seattle we played to some people, and we were pretty wild, came out with masks on, yelling... and it

turned into a more fast-paced thing. And then the next night, to surprise ourselves, we started out the opposite way, with me telling a soft story in the dark, and then starting a smooth, slower tempo song. That's a balance that we... more than pushing ourselves to surprise ourselves, we're balancing.

J: I think the best, some of the best times I feel when we're playing is when I say a sentence, and I just let it go, to be... however absurd I want it to be—

IF: "Let it go," repeat it over and over again?

J: No, like, let it go out into... nowhere. That's how I surprise myself. It's just a matter of acting, and letting the act just take over... take one step after the other. And of course—I have every right to stop, too. Well, not every right, but... I can do it.

IF: Now, you're talking about things being different every night... I think the opposite of that is folk music, like certain kinds of punk rock now. When I was younger I was totally against tradition, of any kind, but now I've been listening to music with d-beats for half of my life—and that feels good, when another band plays a d-beat, and we all do our dances that affirm that we're alive, that we got through all this shit and we're celebrating with our traditions, traditions we made. I'm not sure I think that's a bad thing anymore. Can that

coexist with trying to do something different every night, or with just letting something different happen every night?

J: Yeah... that's how we play music. We throw the music in there that we've done...

IF: The musical themes are the same, right?

R: We do have parts that we habitually play. But at the same time, if you listen to some of our parts, it's not... you have to go back to the '60's, or the '40's, or... I guess I'm going to say it, to jazz music. I'm not going to say we're a jazz band, but—our music itself is not a brand new thing that's never been heard on the surface of the earth. It's not common in punk rock circles, but...

IF: Well, people playing music or singing together or doing rituals to get everybody out of their heads, that goes back to the beginning of time.

R: Yeah, you're talking about these punk songs or these folk songs as universals... where you can go to Chicago and you can hear a punk band, you can go to New York and hear a punk band, and it makes you feel comfortable having that security, that home—it's like a net or something... but—

IF: On tour, Mark and I would talk every day about what the difference was between that security when it's life-affirming and when it becomes an incarceration... we didn't come to any conclusions, though.

R: I'm not saying we're not that—I'm about to say we are that. Because if you listen, what we play can get really primal, and that goes beyond, that's at the heart of everybody—banging on a drum, banging on a bucket, yelling, that's in the woods, that's cave man music. That's universal, we're playing that.

IF: You have done a lot playing, though, a lot of playing musical instruments...

J: When you talk about roots... we met in Philadelphia, a lot of black musicians have come out of Philadelphia, and we've been around black culture a lot, and we do—we sound black, we have that in us. I've been increasingly interested in African percussion, and that is primal—you know, humanity came from Africa. We use clapping, we use all those forms... sometimes I think of—a thousand dead people, I'm possessed by them, and we're here to raise the dead.

IF: A lot of white musicians have talked about what you're saying before, in the 1950's and 1960's, placing African traditions in opposition to Western civilization, and trying to desert Western civilization and learn instead from this other tradition...

J: Yeah, and—I mean, before, when we started this, I was like "I'm sick of this white boy shit." You know? I guess I do feel like that's kind of a bad thing, to just say fuck you to all of punk history... but that, too, sprang out of the work of a lot of American black musicians that didn't get a lot of credit for what they did.

IF: Yeah, that whole history is invisible behind—

J: And that's been argued before, too—black people can be way more articulate about that than I can, but it's something that I feel, and when I say we sound "black," I don't want to limit it and omit anything else that we could sound like or that we have hints of, but... I think it's very important that we came from Philadelphia, and that's how ... we are.

IE: That's a controversial thing, though—when you talk about "sounding black," is that something that you can do without having the actual life experience of being a black American? Or is that something that can transcend race and ethnicity? How do you define...?

J (emphatically, determinedly): I think I just have to say that—we sound black. We sound more than that, too, but...

R: Well, I... wait, why do you feel that you have to say that?

J (serious): I can't explain it, dude, I don't know. We came from Philadelphia. We are from there.

(a minute later)

R: I want to clarify something that John was saying—we don't sound like we're black like we are black, that we have that personal history, or we go through things that other people do... but there's another part of the history of music or American history that's ignored, pushed to the side. And we respect that, we have learned from that more than maybe from rock and roll or punk rock. He's not saying we're from that race—it's more like, instead of "jazz," the term "black classical music." That's where that term comes in, the word "black"—it's not, we're not, I mean, race is a fiction, and that's exactly where we're coming from... but that word, in this interview, should be clarified.

IE: OK, before, we were talking about departing from expectations—and then we were at the opposite end of the spectrum, tying into this long-standing historical tradition. You seem to be drawing a distinction between the tradition of expectations, and a more "primal" (?) tradition... maybe you're not doing this consciously, but that's what I got out of what you're saying, like there's a tradition of constricting expectations, and then a tradition that is—a more primal force, that you can be possessed by. Like you talked

about being possessed by a thousand generations of dead people...

J: I feel like that's right, but that connection has totally been unconscious.

IE: That's just one way to construct the whole thing. I wanted to talk about—a folk tradition of violating tradition, a movement of denying movements, a history of evading history—like the Dadaists, some of the more theater-oriented stuff that you do reminds me of what they were doing, and then... OK, there's jazz, and then there's free jazz—

R: Well, there's a million different kinds...

IE: A friend of mine is an African-American historian studying the history of jazz in this country up through Sun Ra, and he wrote in his dissertation about free jazz that what the musicians were actually trying to do was to make a music that could escape the inertia of jazz, the ways that jazz had been colonized and occupied by Western, white capitalist forces, bought out and the musicians addicted to capitalists' drugs and so on... and like I was talking about before, when you spoke about balance, how a ritual that was a means of escaping expectation can give rise to new expectations... anyway, in that text he argues that the more precise way to put those words together is "jazz free," that they were trying to make a jazz-free music, a music that escaped from everything that had been jazz. They would practice playing together and hitting the notes that everyone expected least, the most fucked up notes, and doing the shit that nobody was ready for, that would make the white critics and other vultures uncomfortable, that would create a space where nobody knew what was going to happen.

J: I do listen to a lot of black classical music, but I don't have much of an academic background, I couldn't be a historian... I think I should get into it more, get more points of reference, just so I can grow. I think those guys, they felt natural doing that... and the way we have the music and the words coordinated, that's how we feel natural, you know. Like running across a room, and saying... nothing—it could be silence, and I could step, and just be frozen. And that feels natural, and at the same time comfortable, too. I don't want it to be some kind of war with criticism, somebody establishing himself as a critic... you know, when we

played in Seattle there was one guy, who was just sitting in his chair like this, he was a critic. And of course I ignored him, but he kind of got to me after we'd played and he was still there being this cynical guy. I don't want it be like that—not too much thinking about it, just being human. That's maybe why people do join in. That last show at the bookstore in Olympia, I saw this girl, she was leaning against the bookcase, and I walked up to her—we were singing that tune, I think, and I just started to go "ululululul," to just move my head, and that vibrato... and then she, all of a sudden, starts making noise. And I kept on doing it... eventually I left, but—that felt totally natural.

R: I forget—you said something that got me.

J: A war of critics?

R: Yeah—

IE: Are you saying that when there's a "critic" present, somebody who's just thinking about things intellectually—

J: Well, I'm not usually aware of the crowd, as much, but I just don't want things to be...

R: This isn't our product that we made, that's out there for people to weigh against everyone else—because it's not against everyone else...

IE: That's a good line!

R: ... it's a part of everything, you know? We're doing this with everybody. And—you asked us before—instead of for others or for ourselves, it's *with*, it's with them. And I think what we do—I don't want to say it's an example, but it's definitely with people, and if you've seen us play and you've been there, then you know that.

IE: That sounds... a little more deliberate, a little more out of the closet than what you were saying before about not trying to have any expectations at all. It sounds like there is some sort of feeling about what would be good for your interactions with people to be.

J: Well, I was just saying... how we just like to feel natural, you know...

R: What we actually do, and what I think of critics... are two different worlds. This is coming out right now, from me. When we play, those ideas are in my body, in my

head—but they're not—they don't affect what we do.

J: I just meant, like—the “natural” aspect, that's the no-plan.

IE: You're saying “doing what feels natural,” but in the story that I offered earlier, doing what feels natural can be a problem because it can be nothing but what's expected. To create a situation where I'm not doing what comes naturally, but doing something else, sometimes that can be really liberating. But maybe this is just semantics.

J: I think we're going, I think we're on the right track but we're using the wrong words. Because that's what I mean by “natural,” just—doing the weirdest things. I can't, I can't throw words on that.

IE: So I'm—there's a part of me for which the best thing in the world is when nobody knows what's going to happen, and I'm in a place where everything is up in the air. I've tried to found my politics, my engagement with society—I mean the deliberate aspects of my engagement with it—on pushing for that, you know, instead of pushing for some anarchist ten-point platform, or more reformist demands like “better management of the workplace” or whatever. But I'm straddling these two worlds, there—the world where you don't want to put a name on anything, you don't want to try to repeat anything, or set any goals, at all—and then the other world, which is deliberate—

R: I, this is something I've been thinking about, and I'm in the same place that you are, with weighing these options, like which way to go.

IE: I've been just trying to combine them, but there seems to be some kind of tension there.

R: This is something that I've... in more than just playing music, in my life—when I'm thinking about something that I want, or something that's going to happen, instead of having an ideal, exact picture of the end, that goal, the act is the goal. And you completing that. You have the idea, you act, and just the act is enough, as the goal, instead of having this—finishing picture. And that's the medium that I'm working with right now.

IE: Perhaps it's like you were saying to me a minute ago, John—you don't want to put a name on something, or elevate it to an

end, or a desired thing, you don't want to be like “freedom from expectation is the goal, let's create a strategy to attain that goal”... because that freezes everything up. But at the same time, for me at least, it feels like if I don't do something to get myself there, I'm not going to be there.

J: Yeah.

IE: And I, personally, I enjoy being there with a lot of other people. It feels like the energy is multiplied by everybody else who's in there. The difference between two people performing for a bunch of critics who are just sitting there, and a whole room of people all just surprising each other constantly...

R: I think that just as much as people who see us are surprised, I'm surprised by people watching us.

J: Yeah, no shit!

R: The truth... the truth.

IE: Yeah, that's totally what I want...

R: I mean, I'm surprised that this is happening, right now.

IE: That's been the paradox and the challenge for me over the last few years—how to be a partisan of chaos, or whatever you choose to call it, without... freeze-drying it.

R: More than a matter of trying to create something, I guess it's... coming to an understanding...

J: I guess maybe if you have a—I'm thinking “will,” but I don't know if I could define that will. Some openness...

R: It goes with what I said a few minutes ago. Instead of trying to attain something that you already have defined, just being—like a being. Just being a being and being.

J: (struggles to remember a passage he thinks is from Sartre's *St. Genet*)... It's about the nature of somebody, and once they feel—OK, so this person has a new consciousness, they have a new life. And they have new commitments... I wish I could remember it. Once we feel that we have this new consciousness, that we're on this new path—“once one feels that he's entering the world from a new point of view, with new commitments, believes he's gone beyond what was before, he realizes that he has returned to his starting point.”

R: What he's talking about sounds like an evolution of circles, one after another—

J: “To adopt a mental attitude is to place oneself in a prison without bars.”

[whatever you believe imprisons you]

IE: We were talking about words... a lot of the expressions we've been using sort of point to things rather than representing them, and it may be hard to transcribe this interview in a way that makes sense, with all those generalizations. But that abstractness can be a way to protect yourself, too, to resist the legislation of nouns.

R: I don't disagree with words or labels, but you have to know that reality and life is here, and words are just on top of that—and we can play with them.

IE: It seems to me, if you want to talk about freedom, our lives are made up out of these words...

R: You have to make that distinction, I think, to feel comfortable with either. You have to know that you're living here (gestures in one direction), that you're living this life, and these words are here (gestures in another direction)—and that's what they are, they're words.

IE: Are you saying they refer to themselves rather than to life?

R: I'm saying you have to know the difference. Wait—what did you say?

IE: Is the whole world of language is a separate world from the world of experience?

R: They're—different things, but they're obviously connected, because you know what I mean when I say... if I say “tree,” you know what I'm talking about, you can walk to that object and touch it. (pause) I hope that served... ha, I hope that what we said just now served—

IE: —the purpose of pointing to the thing that it's about?... Hm... I think about ... you know, if our lives, the expectations in our lives, are made out of words—this (pointing at the tree next to us) is a tree, which you cut down and make into toilet paper, or else it's something you hug, and lock yourself to—you can't just decide not to speak anymore, if you've been raised on language, because those words will go on delineating and denoting inside your head.

But you can play in the language—"tree... tree, tree, tree" (singing)

R: ... and then you have Herds and Words!

IF: ... until you give it some other kind of meaning.

J: "To adopt a mental attitude is to place oneself in a prison without bars. One seems able escape from it at any moment; and in point of fact, no walls or bars can prevent thinking from going as far as it likes. But actually, at the very moment this thinking believes it has gone beyond this chosen attitude, and that it is entering the world by a new path, and with a new point of view and its new commitments, it has become aware that it has returned to its starting point." And that's like—you know, where do we go from here, with surprising ourselves. Because we have full control, and then when we realize that we're in this new place, we're like—"oh shit, I'm in control... I'm back where I started."

R: Is there anything left?

IF: These are all just points of departure ... I guess the one thing we didn't talk about is how the skill level, the proficiency that you have as musicians, as performers, people who aren't afraid to do crazy stuff, how that intersects with creating these spaces of freedom—like, does somebody have to be an expert to create that space?

R: Definitely not.

J: He started playing drums...

R: ... a year ago. Seriously. The drums I use I got a year ago.

J: I started playing bass clarinet half a year ago.

R: We played together before that using different instruments.

IF: But are you more capable now than you were a year ago of using the drums to

make a situation that is... out of control?

R: It's not about how good you are.

J: No!

R: It's not about how good anyone is. We're there, and we do what we can do.

J: Yeah, we're not—professionals, at all.

R: I don't have these limits of talent, or limits of—anything. I just play how I play. I'm not going to say it gets better, but it can change. I feel comfortable, and that's what matters.

IF: All the other skills and proficiencies aside, it's the feeling comfortable that's the real resource. The fifteen-year-old kid that a lot of us have been, that's playing his first show and is just terrified—the chief resource that he or she is lacking is that comfort, that knowledge that whatever happens, it's OK.

R: At the same time that whatever happens is OK, I still get that gut excited feeling sometimes, that I initially got when I first played my first show... back in the '90's. (laughter) Why I think that might happen is that—we keep saying this, but we do something new every night, or we throw a new element in, and I'm excited to see how it turns out, like when I was younger, playing a show, I wanted to see how that would turn out.

IF: So you don't think, as far as the importance of what's going on, that there is a difference between when the fifteen-year-old plays his first show and he's terrified, and when...

R: It's relative... I mean, he's him.

J: I don't... when I first played shows, I felt this detachment from my mind, or just—from my hands, that I had to be outside myself, and watch myself. I hardly ever feel that feeling anymore.

IF: So is that something that you've built up, an ability you've developed?

J: Yeah.

IF: So in that sense, is that a sort of a skill that is required for what you're doing?

(both): well...

J: Sometimes I do become conscious of the whole

situation, like I have this invisible person observing me and everything else... and that's usually negative for me.

IF: For me... deliberately trying to create situations where everybody feels that comfort level, my experience is that it often takes somebody who feels that comfort level to bust through, and everyone can follow through the space, the hole that she leaves. But that goes back, again, to going to lengths to create these situations without expectations, that sometimes that's something you would have to plot like you would plot a murder.

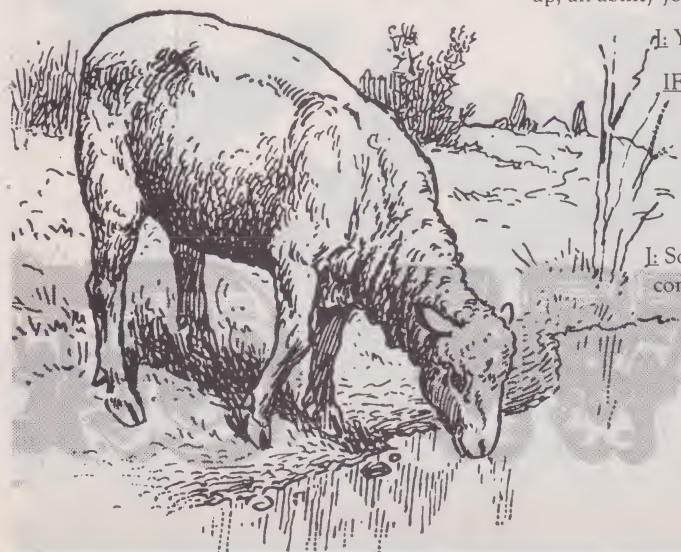
R: A reality heist.

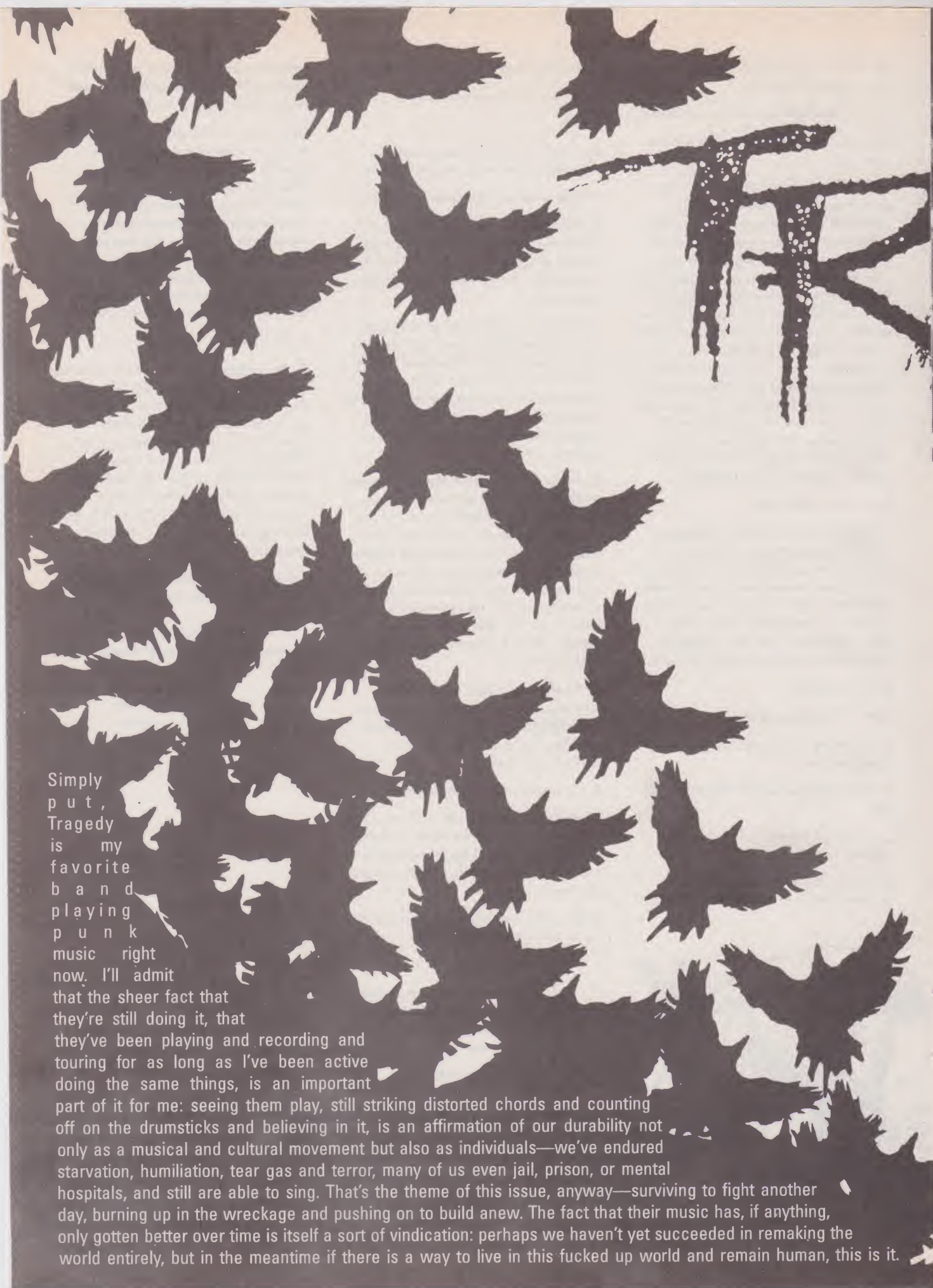
IF: But really, I think anyone can do it, can create a crazy situation or play an amazing show or whatever. A lot of it depends on the context, not the individual. I think having more experience, coupled with good momentum, just raises the probability that you'll succeed in doing it when you try in a given situation. That's a good reason to go on tour, to get that experience busting out of different situations.

Robert wants everyone to know they can contact him for tape duplicating.

morethandrums@yahoo.com
www.angelfire.com/scifi/mnstrattacks

Word Herds
759 W. Bridwell Street
Glendora, CA 91741





Simply put, Tragedy is my favorite band playing punk music right now. I'll admit that the sheer fact that they're still doing it, that they've been playing and recording and touring for as long as I've been active doing the same things, is an important part of it for me: seeing them play, still striking distorted chords and counting off on the drumsticks and believing in it, is an affirmation of our durability not only as a musical and cultural movement but also as individuals—we've endured starvation, humiliation, tear gas and terror, many of us even jail, prison, or mental hospitals, and still are able to sing. That's the theme of this issue, anyway—surviving to fight another day, burning up in the wreckage and pushing on to build anew. The fact that their music has, if anything, only gotten better over time is itself a sort of vindication: perhaps we haven't yet succeeded in remaking the world entirely, but in the meantime if there is a way to live in this fucked up world and remain human, this is it.



AGEEX

I stopped by their not-so-native town of Portland, Oregon in Spring of 2002, and asked the three of them who were in town (bassist Billy was out on tour with other punks... see "The Punk Band As Anarchist Collective" for bassist jokes) some questions. The tapes wouldn't play in the stereo I was using then, but almost a year later I finally got them to work and transcribed this sometimes-contentious conversation.

Inside Front: All right, the first question I wanted to ask is... how you feel about the d.i.y. music press. I've done a lot of these interviews, and I often feel when I'm doing interviews or writing reviews that I'm using the band as a sort of screen onto which to project all the things that I, the journalist, want to get across. Do you feel like 'zinesters are a bunch of vultures, or...?

(stony, uncomfortable silence)

Todd (finally): It's horseshit. (relieved laughter all around)

Yannick: (says something about the importance of d.i.y. media in the infrastructure of the d.i.y. community, which the tape recorder picks up as a muffled rumble of low frequencies)

Paul: No, I think it's inherent in any media that it's going to be biased in favor of whoever is conducting the interview or review, or whatever reference point is involved... so I don't think there's anything necessarily strange about that. I think maybe if you have perspectives from different reference points, it can offer some sort of balance to really understand what's being described.

Todd: It's always annoying when you do an interview with someone who wants to ask you questions just so they can state their opinion about the said question. But then I'm just kind of relieved because, you know, I don't have to talk as much. But I guess we end up doing so many interviews on tour that it's like... um, I don't really remember what the question was.

L.E.: That's fine, it was a broad topic. Here's something I wanted to ask you: do you think of yourselves as artists or artisans, in terms of the music you make? Are you, like, working people creating a product, not a product in the sense of a commodity but a product as a part of a folk culture—or are you artists, creating unique self-expressions?

Todd: If those are my two choices, I don't think I'd go with either one. I don't really consider myself an artist, or us as a band... to me, playing music is what we do, it's our reflection of what's around us. Actually, I was just reading this Henry Miller book where he was talking about writing, saying that writing is only necessary because our world is so far removed from true experience that you need writing as an attempt to be in touch with that... it made me kind of think of music in the same way, that music is the same thing. If we were living in a more sane world, maybe that world's own creations would sound more like music and music wouldn't be something that people have to make to try to save themselves or feel better about what's going on around them. But, given the way we live, that's how I see music, for us—that's what comes out, the product of our lives and what we do. And I think that music and the feelings that music releases in us make our lives more tolerable, make us feel a little bit more sane—and hopefully make other people feel that way, too.

Paul: Just to add on to that, I basically agree—when I go too long without playing music, I actually, physically and mentally, feel a tension build up that it seems I can only release with music. But—though I wouldn't say I think of myself as an artist

or our music as art—in this particular band, I think we tend to think of everything that comes out in the end as a whole, rather than writing some songs and fitting words to them or whatever. I think the primary reason behind that is what Todd said—it's a product of who we are and everything around us, so it makes sense that everything comes together as some overall statement.

Todd: When it comes to doing tours and making actual artwork for records, that's something that we have to try to do, and organize ourselves to do, but the actual act of playing music isn't something we actually have to try to do or set out to do. We get in a room together, and music... comes out.

Inside Front: You all play in other bands, and this one seems to be the one that you take the most seriously as a chance to do things that would be called artistic by some people, in the sense that you (Paul) were talking about, being really conscious of how the final product fits together... maybe this is off base, but though obviously you don't consider yourselves artists in the bourgeois, upright sense of the term—the elitist sense of the word—there's a sort of tension in the music you've made between innovations and doing new stuff on the one hand, and being a part of this long-standing punk rock tradition on the other. So are you setting out deliberately to do innovative things, or...?

Todd: I think I can tell what you're asking, and my answer would be that—I don't think we ever try to do anything different, as far as "let's try to make hardcore music sound different than it sounded before"—not that we even did that, but...



I think that what happens is, and I think that what's beautiful about punk music, is that anyone can do it and you don't have to be specifically musically talented by some standards or whatever. What's most important is that when you're making the music, it's real and it's coming from the combination of people that are making it. And if you're trying to copy someone else or sound a certain way, even if your whole goal is to sound like nothing else, then you have a preplanned thing that molds you—to me—molds you into sounding... I don't know.

Paul: Maybe that obstructs your ability to make music that is actually a product of the four people, rather than... because even for those four people to agree on it being a certain thing, you'd have to all have the same idea of what that is.

Yannick: We don't want to be innovative, but we definitely take from our influences and try to add something instead of just going through the motions of writing songs in the same style that wouldn't be interesting...

Todd: Well, my point is, if I write lyrics, I normally don't sit down and say "OK, now I'm going to write lyrics for this song"—the lyrics I end up writing, usually a thought comes into my head and I end up writing it down and then it develops into lyrics. So I can say those lyrics came from a true thought that came into my head, for whatever reason, based on my surroundings—therefore it tends to not be as much of a pre-planned thing. And the same with the music—when I think of a song, a lot of times it just pops into my head while I'm walking down the street, I go home and figure it out, maybe next time we practice I play it. Maybe it's a variation of some song I'd just listened to that morning, that somebody else wrote...

Paul: But I think the key there is that the element that distinguishes between art and production is... passion, however it's derived, even if that be passion as an influence from some particular music you listened to, at least that passion is pushing whatever you make to come from within you—even if you are influenced by the outside world. Maybe that's the case, to some degree—part of it is that we're all music nerds, what we like is all over the place, and I think if you were really well-versed in music you could probably see that in our music. But I think maybe the key there is what Yannick was referring to, that extra element that makes it something more than just going through the motions: even if we're influenced by other music, playing together has the feeling and the joy of... wanting to create something, rather than just recreate something.

Todd: I'd like to think that if anybody ever thought that anything we did was innovative or different or whatever it would be because we are four individual people who create something together, and therefore, I guess, technically,

it shouldn't be like anything else, with that combination of people.

Inside Front: So that's not a conscious thing, it's something that just comes out of the way you approach things. How do you decide which riffs, which ideas, go into this band as opposed to some of the other bands you've done?

Paul: I mean, we don't limit ourselves, and we don't try to be avant garde either, but I'd say at this point we have, to some degree, some sort of style that we can stick to, to some degree. I mean, some things we try, and they're just too far out there...

Todd: I mean, nobody ever comes to practice with something totally out there... but sometimes, somebody will come to practice with something that's a little bit more melodic, or a little bit less melodic, or whatever, and we try it, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Usually, if it comes naturally, if we play something and it feels like—it feels right, or it doesn't. We throw out tons of stuff.

Inside Front: But you write pretty fast, compared to some bands I know.

Todd: Yeah, I guess we're used to playing with each other.

I have no far out influences... as far out as I would go would be '77 punk, but... I pretty much listen to both kinds of music: punk and hardcore.

Inside Front: What are some of the more far out there influences or sources that you've ripped off, that people might not notice?

Todd: Me, I have no far out influences... as far out as I would go would be '77 punk, but... (here comes the wind-up for a joke they must tell a lot) I pretty much listen to both kinds of music: punk and hardcore.

Paul: I'd say that's probably far out for people who listen to our music,

in general. We're definitely very influenced by '77 punk and early '80's punk, and there are elements of musical styles that we sound nothing like that we take and use.

Inside Front: So the stuff you're drawing on is pretty much all in the punk tradition, is that what you're saying?

Todd: Pretty much. I mean, we could say that we stole ideas or riffs or feeling from New Model Army or something like that—that'd be about as far as we could go.

Yannick: I'm probably the one who listens to the most wide-ranging music—

Todd: He likes Pink Floyd, stuff like that (laughter). I mean, I can't say that it's influenced your songwriting at all—

Yannick: That's what I mean, but I did realize that we have a straight up AC/DC riff.

Todd: If anything, I would say the music we take riffs directly from is stuff that doesn't sound like us, but that is punk related.

Yannick: Sometimes you get an idea for a change or a transition from something...

Todd: I actually have a little book, and if I'm listening to something I'll hear the way a band goes from one part to the next part, and I'll just remember that, and write it down. And when I'm trying to figure out something, and I need that one part, then I remember it. It's kind of ridiculous to be like "that band is an influence," because we sound nothing like them. But I think that's what happens when you listen to music all the time... and while I can't say that my musical scope is really broad, I'm also obsessed with punk and hardcore music from all over the world, so... to me, that alone is a huge scope of music that—from the outside, I'm sure people would say that it all sounds the same, but the more you look into it the more it all sounds different, and the bands from each country have their own feel to the music, their own language.

Paul: I had a friend who was making fun of me the other day, he was in my car and he was like "You really don't listen to anything but punk music, do you?" And I was like, "Yeah, I listen to hardcore too." But—I thought about it, and I do listen to a few token non-hardcore bands, but I'd say the reason why I don't derive much influence from anywhere else and I'm not terribly interested in lots of other music is that—that connection, whatever that feel that comes from punk music that I can relate to, I just don't really find elsewhere. I mean, there's a few random other records of different styles that I like a little bit, but it's all really token things that might work... in the right mood, or something like that, whereas punk music—it's broad enough that every mood you can think of, there's a song for.

Yannick: There's just so much, to keep you interested in it. There's no moment when I really tire of punk.

Inside Front: I guess I wonder—OK, punk is a folk music tradition, because people play it, not an elite, and we've been playing punk rock for twenty five years. That's different from the kind of music you hear on the radio, where it's supposed to be different every year, new and improved products and progress. I guess classical music was or is an example of that demand for innovation in music, too. At the same time, I wonder when the final possible combination of notes with a d-beat is played, what happens then—do we go back and start with the first one again, or...?

Yannick: Yes. (laughter)

Todd: Well, like I said, I think it happens naturally—things evolve, and music changes naturally. If you read things from early hardcore

bands, or look at a band like the Bad Brains, like the early stuff they wrote, if you read what they were listening to—they weren't listening to music that sounded like what they sounded like. But somehow they made this music that was totally raw and fast and sounded almost like nothing else that had been made. Or Minor Threat, even—if you read about Minor Threat, they were talking about listening to the Jam and Wire and stuff, and they were making this music that was totally different...

Paul: Well, they ripped off the Bad Brains.

Yannick: That brings up where we're heading, what's the future...

Inside Front: That's what I'm saying, yeah.

Yannick: Because we are only listening to pretty much what we're playing. Of course, we're adding something, which goes back to the last question, but it wasn't culled from various far-fetched things, just—

Todd: No, but they weren't pulling from weird things, they were pulling from rock music, which evolved into punk, which evolved into hardcore—

Yannick: Yeah, but there was a definite step there. There was a definite step from the Jam to Minor Threat.

Todd: Yeah, but somebody who dropped out of hardcore eight years ago would probably think that a lot of the bands now sound like they've taken a step, too.

Paul: I think that question's pretty unanswerable, the future's unresolved...

Yannick: I didn't mean we could see the future, but since we do listen to stuff that's so close to what we come up with I wonder how much... where we'll derive the creativity from, or if we'll just give it...

Todd: But—to me creativity isn't just finding some new weird chords, it's—you write your own words, and put your own ideas into it, and your own feeling. I mean, talking about folk music, I'm not that educated in folk music, but my assumption is that folk music, like acoustic folk music, probably hasn't evolved—people are probably playing the same open chords on acoustic guitars, and that doesn't mean that, for people who like that kind of music, that people aren't making new songs that are good to them.

Paul: Right, and the point there is that folk music doesn't serve the role so much of trying to create something new so much as to answer to the needs, or reflect a certain culture—that's why it's folk music. I think punk music can do that to a certain extent, endlessly, though it might peter out as far as how many people want to keep listening to the same d-beat songs over and over again. But maybe that d-beat genre is a good example—you

pretty much have to be a total nerd, into that style, to want to have every record by every band with "Charge" or "Dis" in its name. I mean, there's some really great stuff that's all like that, but it answers to a pretty limited audience. Punk as a whole, there's so many genres that you can keep doing that for a while. I guess ultimately the question is—is it to become something which is simply answering to itself, reflecting itself, or does it... does the culture evolve with the music, or vice versa? I guess that question asks whether our culture is evolving.

Inside Front: Right. Are we trying to be part of an evolutionary culture, or a cyclical culture?

Todd: I think it keeps changing. I don't think it has to get more technical, more out there, more experimental, more anything.

Yannick: As far as styles go, if rock and roll or early punk or whatever was superseded by something else, we can assume then that punk is eventually going to be superseded by or evolve into something else, or be a catalyst for it. Just like in the early '80's, something will change, and punk will be a relic, still alive in some sense, but we can't assume that it's just going to be an endless cycle.

Todd: No, what I'm saying is I don't see it as a cycle—

Yannick: Yeah, OK—

Todd: I don't think—I mean, I don't want to name a certain band, but if you just think of a certain band that's putting out records now, that you like, you can't really say that they sound completely like another band from five or ten years ago. If they're good, they have their own thing that's a little bit different in some way.

Paul: But I think if you think about when those changes happened, they didn't just happen musically, they exploded because, in 1977, there were a lot of pissed off youth that had just come from a generation that was supposed to change the world, and when it didn't, there were a bunch of disillusioned people, and then punk rock exploded. And then you could say in the '80's, there were a bunch of, again, disillusioned, angry young—suburban kids, essentially, and that exploded into what early '80's hardcore was. Like, Black Flag wouldn't have been Black Flag if there hadn't been a bunch of fucking angry southern California fuckups. And that's why every kid in the early '80's listened to fucked up music and went around on a skateboard and was considered a vandal: in answer to what was going on at the time. I think you have to look at that in a larger perspective; what happens culturally is that eventually that becomes swallowed up, and that anger becomes quenched, and the problem is that it's like one of those little twisty balloons—you squeeze it one place, it's going to pop out

somewhere else. The question is—is that going to be within punk culture, or maybe punk culture, once it's squeezed, just becomes cyclical within itself. Who knows when another moment is going to come along when that anger or that particular thing can explode on a mass scale where there's thousands and thousands of people, or whether that will ever happen again.

Inside Front: I guess the way that I see it... Some bands are always bringing in new changes, new variations on beats or whatever, while other types of music spin off and become these cyclical folk culture genres, where people actually aim for being something like the other bands, and it does come out that way. I guess you're refusing to associate yourselves with either of those two options... ?

Yannick: I definitely think we're doing the cyclical thing, in that case, because we're not trying to reinvent something...

Todd: And I mean, that's just musically—punk, as a culture, has definitely evolved, and changes so much... the network, and the d.i.y. culture as it is, is so much different even than it was five years ago, let alone fifteen years ago.

Paul: One of the ways that's obvious is—when you see someone who dropped out ten years ago, they look at what's going on now and they think that it's nothing like the punk they were involved with. So often it's the case that it's evolved beyond what they related to so that they don't understand it anymore.

Todd: While we're used to that, because we live in that culture—we don't see how it changes.

Inside Front: So, along the lines of what you [Paul] were saying, what's the relationship between anarcho-punk music, and that tradition, and anarchist, punk rock activism, squatting and all that? If you're interested in that kind of action, that activism, that whole community, is there an imperative to keep the music that it's been based around alive?

Paul: I think one really rests so hard on the other that I'd think that if someone was really involved in one, whichever one they wanted, they probably would stick with it. However—I'd say that for the most part, it's more of a soundtrack for a culture, in which case, sure, the music is important as long as... From a social perspective, as long as someone continues to get something good out of it, then it's important. From a musical standpoint, if anarchism or whatever, that lifestyle, continually pushes the music in some artistic sense, then sure, I'd say it's important—but I think that generally, it's more the other way around, that there are a lot of people who are just into the music, into the

sound, and maybe they relate to the politics of anarchism in a very loose way.

Inside Front: How do you see yourselves, as far as what you're trying to do with your music? You were saying it's about self-expression as a way just to try to survive...

Todd: Well, I think that would be the point. Like I said before, I don't think we're trying to do anything. We play music, and express ideas, and create something that we like and we want to share with other people. And in terms of vision, ideals, I don't think we have a larger goal outside of that.

Inside Front: So you make music in the d.i.y. community...

Todd: I think we just present something, and whatever people get from it is up to them.

Yannick: That's definitely what I would say, but I thought—a few months ago you were saying that you were going for something, not forcing, but you were trying to convey a message—

Todd: Yeah, but we never got into that. I assumed that you and me were on opposite ends about that, I don't think we necessarily are, but...

Yannick: I've always... felt like, yeah, like you said.

Todd: But what you were saying then was that music is entertainment, and that's not how I feel about it.

Yannick: That's not what I was saying.

Todd: OK. Well, we probably didn't understand each other anyway, because we got cut off, I think we ended before we even got into it. But I think, even from a lyrical standpoint, if there are any slogans in the lyrics it's because they sound good, they fit well, whatever, but it's not to try to force things into people's heads and make them think "oh, yeah, this is bad, and this is good..."

Yannick: We disagree on so much stuff that it would be hard to come up with a coherent plan or agenda.

Paul: I think there is power of propaganda in music, if you want to use that, but I definitely don't think we're the type of band that has any particular message. I had this conversation with someone the other day, they were asking if I knew some pop singer and I didn't know who they were, and they were like "oh, you must be kidding, you're pretending" and I was like, wow, I guess I just forget that I live in such a bubble. She just didn't get the fact that I'm such a dropout I don't know what's going on with Britney Spears and all this bullshit. So I think to some degree, the politics are inherent in our music when our music is so wrapped up in our

lifestyle. I think that there can be an effect based on that—it's not like we're changing the world, we don't have a political agenda we're trying to spread to the masses, but definitely within any media, music or print or whatever, there's power, to influence. Sometimes it's kind of frightening to think what that might be, but I just—the only level of conscious direction in that is knowing that we don't want our music to be just baseless, or our content to be just baseless. We would rather reflect the things that we do feel strongly about.

Todd: Yeah, I'm definitely not saying there's nothing there, I'm saying that what's there is not so black and white—because for me what's there when we play music, the anger and frustration that I put into our music is real, and it comes from a million factors that have gone into my life, and that's nothing that I can completely explain in a song or a million songs. Realistically, people get into punk for so many different reasons that—I wouldn't expect people to get that as the point of the music... but I'm sure that there are people who came from, or arrived at, feelings and frustrations similar to my own. But—that's not the goal of playing music, to get someone else to think a certain thought or feel a certain feeling. Some people are just going to like the music because it's fast and loud or whatever. We have friends that might like it just because they like us as people, or there are people that might like the stuff we sing about, who'd like us lyrically, but musically it's not their thing.

Inside Front: Do you think it prostitutes music to try to make it serve some propaganda end?

Todd: It depends on the way you do it...

Paul: It happens, sure. I think the power, if there's any power in what we do, it's that one person's reality, or one person's common thoughts, or someone else's revelation, some things that might seem... I mean, some of the ways in which we exist and have existed for a long time, at one point, were revelations to us, from the way someone else existed. That's the constant process of thought, that's what keeps me inspired, learning new things, is that constant process of having new revelations and ideas. Perhaps the reflection of where we're at, at this particular point, could serve to do that for someone else. Again, that's not

the intention, but I think that's probably the most powerful point in what we do—I mean, there are very few bands that I've ever listened to that had a specific message that really changed me, maybe bands singing about vegetarianism—but there were bands that would sing and with a certain element of anger or a certain reflection on their lives, and that influenced me to feel differently about myself and the world.

Todd: Sometimes much more than the actual lyrics. But really, honestly, I play music to stay

sane, and anything that anyone else gets out of it is like a bonus, but it's an extra thing to me. I do it for mostly personal, selfish reasons, to stay sane and attempt some kind of satisfaction, happiness.

Paul: To answer what you said, I think when bands prostitute themselves for a message they completely annihilate the power that I was just referring to. In doing that, you reach specific people: you reach the people who are looking for answers rather than ideas. To me, that's so much less powerful—those people aren't going to stop thinking like sheep just because they have different answers now. If there's anything I would ever want to promote to people, it's to think more deeply about things, come up with your own answers. To me that's just one of the fundamental principles of free thinking or whatever.

Yannick: Some of the great propaganda bands, like Conflict and CRASS, were obviously out to send out a message and try to change the world—

Todd: Oh yeah, those bands changed my life, for sure, but I don't think we're one of those bands.

Yannick: I know, I know, but he (the interviewer) was speaking generally, not just about our band. I think bands like that definitely... I mean, it helped a whole social group that at the time was huge, hugely influenced... so the power of that propaganda can't be discarded.

Todd: I've said before in another interview that Conflict probably had—arguably had more influence than any other band, ever, just for the fact that probably thousands and thousands of people were awakened to animal rights and became vegetarian through... bands like that.

Paul: I would argue though that the power there was at least partly from the knowledge that those people were living what they what they were saying—minus — (name withheld out of common courtesy), that is! (laughter)

Yannick: I think it's safe to say that none of them were living it! (laughter)

Todd: Actually my point in that other interview was actually the opposite—where people say "oh, they're hypocrites," or "they don't live up to what they sing about," and that undercuts everything. The propaganda of what you do comes out through your own individual lifestyle. What you say, the ideas you promote, can be more of a fictitious thing. What you actually do with your own life...

Paul: You know, for me, I was influenced by knowing those CRASS records people had a collective, had their own thing going on. To me that was more inspiring than any of the words they were singing. I'm sure there are people who are more academic, so they read lyrics like information, and that information processes in their brains in some logical way, and they're like "oh, this is the answer," but...

Inside Front: Next question: you deliberately keep your music in the d.i.y. sphere—and you seem to be moving more into that, rather than less, which is the opposite of the progression that usually takes place. Is that just because that's where you're most comfortable? Or is that something you consciously think about, the way you produce and distribute music and the way that fits into what's going on in the world?

Paul: Talking about moving in a more d.i.y. direction, or...?

Inside Front: I understand what Todd's saying about making the actual music and lyrics as a response to personal experience, but there's the question of how you introduce that music into the world, and you haven't sold yourselves as artists to some record label—that's a very deliberate choice. I guess that grows out of the context of the lives you've chosen to live, but it's still a deliberate choice.

Todd: I think a difference is—with a lot of bands, they get a little bigger, and then they attempt to get bigger, and they think about what they could do to get bigger... but I think with us it's gone the opposite way. Honestly, I don't think we ever cared how so-called popular we were in the scene, or how many records we sold, but at a certain point we had to think about that, because we were doing things... and I think it was kind of the reverse, how do we react to the fact that we can sell a lot of records, by those standards? What do we do about it? Because if we don't think about it, then someone else who doesn't give a shit is going to pop out of the water and try to get control.

Paul: I think the point in there is that we're influencing, in the practical sense, which I'd say is as important as in any ideological sense. It makes sense that we do it this way—everything else about our lives is about being dropouts, living in this bubble that we live in—to some degree, it's a lot nicer to have fewer people to deal with... though the people that we do deal with, I'm not disrespecting them in any way. Things aren't black and white, sometimes you have to make decisions which don't fit the d.i.y. template or whatever. But I think we've always been conscious of doing things in a way that was comfortable for us.

Todd: I think it all comes down to financial stuff. If we had the finances, I don't think we would even do... I mean, we'd go through fewer steps, fewer other people. We don't, so...

Inside Front: How about the way you do things inside of the band? I know that you are always trying to...

Todd: It's called disorganized organization. It's kind of like my Slingshot organizer over here—it's in about thirty pieces, it's scattered all over the place, but it works.

Inside Front: Well, I know a lot of bands have a serious division of labor problem, in which there's one person sort of telling everyone else what to do, or there's a tension over who's responsible for what.

The most fucked up thing about division of labor in general is when the hand that feeds is separated from the mouth. I think people get caught up in, like, a cooperative consensus mentality that means that everyone has to be brought down or up to the exact same level, and everyone has to be doing the exact same things.

not totally distanced from the hand that's feeding you, so you at least feel like it's your hand to some degree—but there are certain things that make sense. Yannick does a lot of business stuff because, in some senses, he's already been dealing with record stuff for years and years and years. When it comes to fixing a van, I'm the dude in the band that knows how to work on cars... I think within our band sometimes it's a matter of figuring out how to balance that so that everyone knows what's going on, and one person isn't doing too much of the stuff; but I think when one person does something particularly well, there's nothing wrong with that.

Todd: We haven't figured it out, by any means, it's something we're always talking about and trying to work on.

Yannick: We've gone through crises, back and forth...

Todd: Where someone's not pulling their weight, or someone's pulling too much...

Yannick:... and ended up butting heads for a while...

Paul: And I think that is the process of cooperation—there's never a template that you can put down. Though I think that's what a lot of these people want, that I was referring to before—they want the rules according to which you

Paul: I think the most fucked up thing about division of labor in general is when the hand that feeds is separated from the mouth. I think people get caught up in, like, a cooperative consensus mentality that means that everyone has to be brought down or up to the exact same level, and everyone has to be doing the exact same things. We've had frustrations with that to some degree, but I see this happen so often with people who are in this mindset—they want to start a group, and if someone's excelling and doing too well in one direction, that people start going "wait a minute, you're not listening to me." I think there has to be some balance, I think everyone has to be included so you feel like you're

cooperate. You have to put your thumbs up at the right moment, to say the right thing at the right time, everyone has to speak in the same tone of voice. That's not the way people work. People have different ways of speaking and interacting, that's the whole concept of dynamics between people. I think that's one of the problems we've had, is the dynamics between us are different, we're different. That's the hardest thing we've had to deal with, that...

Todd: We're four really stubborn people, really opinionated.

Inside Front: I think, like you're saying, that the organizational structure has to come from the people who are trying to work together, not people imposing a model of organization upon themselves. It's amazing to me that any bands, or groups of people who are really stubborn, are together at all, after a couple years of fighting.

Paul: But I think that any band that does do things on a cooperative basis, which means that there's not one person that's playing a bunch of puppets, which happens—I think that's a great model for the way real cooperation should work, in that it directly answers to the needs of the people immediately involved, whereas you see groups pop up all the time in left culture that are like "let's do a group to save this," or whatever, and some of the times the inner functionings of those groups come to outweigh the focus on whatever it is they're actually trying to do. When the main focal point is where you're trying to get, and everyone agrees that that's what you're doing, then I think the other things tend to work themselves out—definitely with a lot of bumps in the road, but at least that's... the focal point. I think with a band, the whole point is you're playing music and you have to work things out—you're working things out because you want to play music, not because you're attempting to cooperate. The cooperation, part is something that follows.

Inside Front: How about the responsibility, or the relationship, of the band to the larger punk rock community—do you feel like, aside from making music, you have responsibilities to the people you make the music for, or around, or with?

Todd: Not by choice.

Inside Front: Do you feel like you're public property in that sense?

Todd: Yes.

Inside Front: Is that good, or bad?

Todd: Bad.

Yannick: I mean, we do what we do, we play music for ourselves, and consequently we have to...

Todd: I just know, my personal life, this whole thing has pushed me into being more and more antisocial, more and more of a recluse. More and

more guarded, because of being in this small little circle, being in some kind of public eye, being defensive, and other people being offensive—that whole thing's definitely changed my personality, I can't deny that. I don't feel a responsibility like "it's my responsibility to do this, for the scene," or whatever, but I also am, we all are kind of socially dysfunctional in our own ways, I'm not the most extroverted person, and a lot of times if someone approaches me I'm not like "oh, hey, great, how ya doin'?"—that's not my personality. So someone who doesn't know me might not know how to take that, and when you're on tour, and people want to talk to you, you... I feel like I have to use extra energy to be more personable, because people don't know me, and don't know how I react and express myself, so...

Yannick: Does that mean you have to do that?

Todd:... that's like a responsibility.

Yannick: It's not a responsibility for you to be nice to everyone. You just do it because that's your personality.

Todd: But no, I do because that's how the punk scene works, that's what's kind of special about our subculture, that if people like your music, that might not be enough for them to respect what you're doing. If they meet you and—I mean, you know how it is, if people think that your band are shitty people, assholes, then people might not like your music, just like that. I mean, if you care about that anymore.

Paul: I think there's only a certain degree to which you can care about that, but—I think the point is, we do what we do because it's what we want to do. But at a certain point, you have to recognize power, whether you wanted it or not. And if you're in a band—I mean, I don't care what band you are—when you're on stage, there's a power differential that has not been broken down, as much as we may try to say it is when we're playing on basement floors. The band can say things, it can influence people in a way that people on the other side of that differential can't... especially if you're a band that starts to get a little more popular or whatever, that power exists and it definitely influences—to some degree, it ends up affecting how you act.

Yannick: But it's not a responsibility.

Paul: No, it's not a responsibility, but it's—it's relevant to that question.

Todd: Ahhhh, it almost is a responsibility, though—with us being four people who do think about things and are trying to be conscious, if we put out a record that was completely substanceless, I would think that would be irresponsible.

Paul: That goes back to what I was saying before, about bands.

Todd: If we made six thousand pieces of plastic with cardboard around them, that had nothing to them, I would think that would be irresponsible.

(Yannick, indecipherable on the tape recorder, presents what appears to be a counterpoint; the others bring up a time when he seemed to take the opposite position; they work it out amongst themselves.)

Inside Front: OK, another tension I want to ask about between different themes in your band is between, on the one hand, seeking high recording quality, not to mention using at least decent equipment, and on the other hand, being highly critical of technology itself. How does that play out, how do you resolve the tension between being a high-tech-recording band and an anti-tech-idea band?

Paul: You mean, like, we play a show and say something about technology and somebody's like "dude, your amp's on!"?

Todd: Like why aren't we just banging on rocks, or singing a capella or something?

Inside Front: Well, specifically, not just playing the amps but—you have a mastery of the technology you're using, you're pushing for that. Some people who say "fuck technology" are like "yeah, I use whatever."

Todd: One thing I will say is—when it comes to recording, we heavily favor analog recording, which is becoming more and more a dinosaur of sorts. At this point it's an extremely primitive technology, in the face of the high technologies that exist and are being created on a daily basis. That's our favored method of recording.

Paul: If you're saying that technology is bad, and you're picking and choosing between certain kinds of technologies, implying that you're trying to promote a certain direction, that's like saying that missiles are bad and then picking between two particular types of missiles. The difference being that a missile is something that you can have a choice to deploy;

and I think that we're entrenched in technology that we're unable to just shed off our shoulders. Sure, guitars and amps could easily qualify as that—I don't think that was ever the intent of our statement—

Todd: The thing is, unless we're living on the land, in some kind of sustenance lifestyle, basically human life has "evolved" to the point that we make different combinations of technologies, are surrounded by different combinations of technologies, and use those to do whatever we do with our lives. Using the broad definition of technology—I mean, everything you do is—we're always using things somebody else created or invented. Whatever you can make do with of what's there is... I mean, this is an old argument, but we never at any point said "fuck all technology," that's pointless, it's like saying "fuck modern life," like fuck everything. The point is just trying to increase awareness, for people not just to jump head first into every new thing that comes along, for people to remember that ten years ago there was no www-dot-whatever, and now we can't even imagine a world where you wouldn't look around and see that on every billboard, wrapper, label, every single thing—that's like science fiction, to remember that ten years ago there was no such thing, not even on a punk record, and now it's everywhere and we can't imagine life without it. As a band, I think that was our whole intention, to increase awareness and to continue to promote free thought.

Inside Front: To restate the question, in a better world, would there be no recordings? If that's the case, why are they necessary here? And if they are necessary, why are "better" recordings, more high-tech recordings, better?

Todd: Maybe that's kind of like the Henry Miller thing I was talking about. At the point we've come to, we're adapting to what is around us, to make do the best we can. That's the point I was making before—maybe in a less confusing world, music wouldn't be such a separate thing, or wouldn't sound the way it does.

Yannick: Then this all leads to our differences over the internet and so on. Since the internet is now so entrenched and part of everything in the world, how do you see that?

Todd: I mean, I don't think that high-tech recordings are great—

Paul: I think the difference is the perspective you're looking at it from. I don't think the internet, from a technological viewpoint, is largely different from telephones. Telephones completely shaped and altered not only our culture, but the way in which we think, the reality in which we live. We now know that you can pick up this little thing and immediately talk to someone, while normally you would have to spend time traveling to see them. So they not only altered the way our minds think, they altered the dimension of time itself. I think the point is, with the internet, it became another technology that did that—it

completely altered the way we think about our connection to the rest of the world: you can get on the internet and send a message instantly to someone in China. To me that completely abstracts the distance, and everything else. But all of that is a matter of intellectual thought or whatever—whereas, to me, there's the matter of the actual, physical effects of doing things that affect the way you think and the way you spend your life. Personally, there are certain technologies that I know affect my life in a way that I don't feel so good about. There are people that we give shit for riding around in a car more than necessary—I decide I should stop, and ride a bike. It's a decision that I make—I know riding in a car changes the way that I think about my life, as opposed to riding on a bicycle. To me the internet is just one of those things, where I occasionally use the internet to get information or do email or whatever—I don't see it like "I'm getting my hands dirty," because the rest of my life is involved in these decisions. But to me, staring at a computer screen for too long alters the way that I think—I'd rather be staring at sunshine, or rain, or whatever—things that are more important to me. So to me, that makes it an important personal choice, along with the rest of the personal choices that I make.

Todd: I'm saying—I don't think we as human beings needed that invention, just like we didn't need most of the inventions. And that one in particular—I don't care to have it in my life, and so I'm stubborn.

Yannick: But the question, specifically—recording is a few steps further along the line, it's past the point of the invention of recording stuff instead of just keeping memories. Now it's so part of the way we live that we don't see it that way... of course it changed everything the same way that telephones did—but what I'm saying is that now the internet is fully entrenched in everything that we do. Whether you as a person uses it or not, it's there, and it's there to stay, or to be superseded by something else down the line—

Todd: I don't have the illusion that I'm making it change by not using it. But that doesn't mean that I want to use it just because it's there.

Paul: There were people who resisted recorded music, simply as a lifestyle choice. There were people who thought that taking a photograph was—stealing your soul, or something like that. There were people who—they knew what music meant, to be able to see it and feel it when it was actually played—and to be able to hear it played back on a phonograph, there were people that freaked out when they heard that.

Yannick: So much of our old argument with *His Hero Is Gone* was based on the righteousness or

whatever of refusing the internet, and technology as such, and I think it was kind of misplaced to try to push that. I think we spoke more as if we had a platform, rather than just personally. I agree with the attack, that you may not want the ways the internet changes the way you live...

Todd: Yeah, but I think it changes the way everybody lives. And I thought that before, but I never had a platform, I never told people "you should stop using the internet—everyone, you should resist."

Paul: I think that self-righteousness was more perceived than spoken.

Yannick: I mean, I was involved just as much in it in the discussions...

Todd: As a person, and as a lyricist, and whatever, I definitely encouraged resistance to technology and rejection of it, and I still do, as a person.

Yannick: Yeah, so do I. The point is, we tried to approach it as a platform, rather than just saying it was a personal thing from our perspective.

Paul: Maybe, but I think there's power in that. Whether it was spoken or perceived, I think there is power in saying "this is something that is happening right now"—because it's only at that moment that you can really say that. Even though we witnessed the introduction of the internet, it's so ingrained in our lives now that it's hard to remember that moment at which it broke. It's right at that moment when a new technology is increased that you can scream your lungs out about how it's affecting you and sound self-righteous or whatever. At some point that argument just becomes null.

Yannick: But we were screaming at a car that was far gone, that couldn't hear us.

Todd: But I also personally enjoyed the fact that it was such a controversial issue that I never thought would be controversial—at that point I enjoyed the fact that saying "fuck this stuff, reject this stuff" would piss people off.

Yannick: The thing is, I still agree with everything you said, but I think more from a personal viewpoint than—trying to talk people into it.

Paul: Yeah, I guess I can see that too, I think... Maybe I can use an analogy that I've made before to someone when I was trying to get them to understand my point of view about understanding these things, understanding technology but also, to broaden it, living in a world which is uncontrollable, which is a perspective that people think is cynical. The analogy is—if you suddenly

awoke in a room with no doors or windows, waist-deep in shit, the fact that you exist in that room amidst that shit—you're not being cynical or pessimistic to say that you exist in that and have no choice but to exist in that. To me, true—I hate to say optimism, because I think it has bad implications—but true living, that can possibly happen in an existence like that, has to come from a recognition of where you actually are. I think if there is any personal salvation, in our own hopes and desires or in anything in this world, it either comes from having that understanding or being so completely blinded that you can just walk around with a smile on your face and pretend that the world is a happy little flower or something. To me, that's the primary point of trying to bring about recognition of these things.

Todd: But going back to your question, to me recorded music is a documentation. In a lot of cases, it's the only proof that something existed. If I pick up some record from some kids in Brazil that somehow recorded a 7" back in 1983, of course I know that this record can never represent the lives these kids lived or what they did when they made this music, but it's the closest thing that I can get to it. Just like I recognize that, to relate it to technology, when I make a phone call, it's not the same as seeing someone in person and having a conversation with them—but it's the closest thing I can get to it sometimes. For me, recording—it's not a substitute for life, it's a documentation of life.

Yannick: But that's assuming that music needs to be documented.

Paul: Yeah. The evolution of technology, if you follow that backwards, philosophically or anthropologically, you could find a point at which the need to capture moments began. If you follow that back, you come to that point which we call pre-history, which, the anthropologists are telling us now, that was the point when humans started doing something different. It seems to be at that moment that everything changed, and there became a need for history, there became a need to pass things down. To say, at any point over the last century, to say that it was fucked up to want or need to capture music to listen to later, I think was a null argument, in the same way that every time someone criticized something that came along that was building upon that same crutch that happened somewhere behind us in that evolution of technology, that was a null argument. Except that—each individual that made that argument was arguing from the point of view of their life having been altered. But all we're doing is continually building layers upon layers of fucked-upness, all—possibly, possibly—stemming from some point in time behind us when our lives became so fractured that we needed to be able to tie down moments, tie down seconds.

Todd: Possibly there's some kind of human conditioning—whether it's conditioned or instinctual—that makes us want to leave a mark in some sense... and most of the marks we leave, obviously, are horrendous and unforgivable, but

I think there's something to be said for wanting to leave a mark that maybe goes against the other things.

Yannick: But how do you see us to be doing that... or what about not leaving marks...

Todd: Well, that's what I mean, like, leaving a mark in a less literal sense than destroying things.

Inside Front: It does seem to be characteristic of human beings in the West that we feel that when life happens, it's unreal, but when it's recorded, it's real.

Todd: I don't even necessarily mean physical things—

Paul: I don't even think it's necessarily Western. I don't want to start sounding like I'm talking primitivist bullshit or anything, but I would take it a lot farther than just Western. I think there's a certain cultural perspective that, from the literature I've read at least, didn't exist in peoples that lived other ways, nomadic peoples for example. This is up until about thirty years ago that there were peoples living this way. They didn't need to make that mark, because they were happy with their existence from day to day. I don't put too much weight in what scientists have told me about these things, or people who have gone and studied them or whatever, but it's interesting to me—to think that humans existed for thousands and thousands of years making virtually no mark on the world... whereas everything that's happened in the last ten thousand years has made not just marks but scars. I think that's an astounding difference.

(Todd leaves)

Paul: I think a lot of that stuff started to sound pretty philosophical and intellectual. I'm simply trying to say something that seems to explain something that is a part of me, something I can relate to. And I can't relate to intellectual or philosophical things that don't, in some way, answer to that.

Inside Front: That don't connect to you, your experience, your feelings in some way, you mean.

Paul: Yeah, maybe it's just that I don't give a shit about things that don't connect to me, which is in some ways abnormal in the human psyche as we know it. But—I'm not intending to say those things as some far-fetched intellectual theory, but simply that, when I talk about these things that we're talking about, I like to at least try to think about where these origins might have come from and how that might be relevant.

Inside Front: OK, so—being in a punk band, you're—well, things aren't always so easy, are they? I know when I saw you in Sweden, the singers' voices were all fucked up, and you (Paul) are always sick... when we were in Belgrade, my friend there told me when you were there you were so sick you were about to die, and a friend somewhere

else told me the same thing about when you were there, and I know the same thing has happened to me on tour. Todd was talking about leaving a mark—I wanted to ask him about where you draw the line between trying to make music to stay sane, and when it becomes something that—the whole process of doing it, getting along, being able to do this despite all the difficulties, emotional and physical and whatever—where you draw the line between trying to make a mark, trying to stay sane, and then the mark it's making on you, so to speak. When the music creates more problems than it solves...

Yannick: Yeah, but I don't know if it does. We obviously get something out of this, or we wouldn't do it.

Inside Front: You wouldn't do it otherwise, if you didn't actually enjoy it.

Yannick: Yeah. In fact there's so much stuff on personal levels, musically, and certainly financially—there's no way I'd do something like this if it wasn't something that I thought was awesome.

Paul: Yeah, by normal people's standards I do nothing out of responsibility, besides the things I do to survive. By those standards, I'm pretty much as far out of the cycle as it gets. Meaning, when I wake up—if I don't have something that moves me to do that day, I'm depressed. Yeah, that's a result of living in the culture we live in, and having to do those things rather than just being happy with existence—but the point I'm getting at is that I don't do things unless they move me or mean a lot to me, and no matter how much I could think about what something should mean to me, if it ever lost its significance to me I wouldn't even think about it. I don't have enough time in my life to do all the things I'm obsessed with or passionate about. I don't have time to do things I don't want to do, to do shit for no reason.

Inside Front: So that explains why you still do it. But you've played punk rock for a lot longer than a lot of people do—what do you think is the difference there?

Yannick: As much as we tried to say we're not trying to do something new or innovative, I think it's changed for us. Even if we're not playing the same music we were, but something similar, it always changes, the circumstances, things just change to be something new every day. Tour, it's all always something new, even if it's not new music it's new experiences.

Paul: Interestingly enough, there's something that I get out of—and I'm not talking about music or lyrics, here—there's something I get out of the actual experience of touring that I think benefits my life in a way similar to how I said if I didn't play music I'd explode. Because—my mind shifts from that waking up and needing something to be passionate about to get me through the day, to... being on tour, I think the constant motion changes the perception of time, and you lose sight

of whatever's at the end of the tunnel because you know that the next day's the same thing. Me, I get in a mode of thinking where I become much more peaceful, I'm just—being, wherever we are. I can spend hours doing nothing, just riding in a van, reading a book or looking out the window, and be totally happy, however slow or fast time is going by. That's something I can never achieve at home, because I think that—to live in the busyness of a city, the time frame of the city, jobs, these kind of things, I think for me after tour my life always kind of shifts back into that gridwork within a certain amount of time, no matter how dropped out I am from normal life. That's something I get out of touring that—maybe you could just get it out of traveling normally, but to me it's irreplaceable, who knows what I'd do without it.

Yannick: When we get back home—none of us really work that much, none of us really have responsibilities or are used to the time frame in the city. I think all the responsibilities that we have and that we do deal with are...

Paul: Granted, it's not the nine-to-five that we come home to, that's not what I'm saying—but even when you just live around the nine-to-five, there are some ways it makes its way into your life. Like if you need to go to a store to do something, you have to do it within certain hours. I usually go through a period when I come home from tour when I'm depressed, because I don't know what to do with myself, and don't know where I'm going. The fucked up thing that happens to me is that I feel like I have to be doing something or something's wrong. I have to be accomplishing something, or something's wrong. What that says to me is that I can't be happy just to be alive—and I don't fight that when I'm in the city, because to me all that matters is being happy, and I think it's great to find things that I'm passionate about. But it's something I'm very conscious of, and ultimately I think that other goal of existence is more important to me, I'd like to live in a place that was quiet enough that I could be happy with whatever I was doing. Accomplishments, stuff to keep us busy, all that shit is ultimately meaningless. We live, then we die, and what matters is that we should be happy in between. What you accomplish or whatever is only a means of achieving that happiness.

Inside Front: So you do what you do because it's the thing you think you can do that can bring you the most happiness in the world, out of everything you could choose.

Paul: It's not the thing, it's a thing.

Inside Front: Got it.

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LACK's Songs Of Protest And Love



Haggard, but satisfied by a tasty vegan stew, I waited for another show to begin. I was in a squat in Oslo, Norway, and going on about the 60th show in two months. Hanging out by the literature table, I caught a glimpse of the first band setting up and saw that their singer was writing out all his lyrics on giant posters and hanging them around the performance space—my attention was snagged enough that I inched forward to watch them play. I watched those four lads, Lack, play their hearts out that night—everyone in a swirl of movement. At one point the singer started break-dancing—what a gift to bring such a beautiful thing to the hardcore scene (later that evening I asked him where he learned to break-dance and he told me that when he was younger he had been a B-boy in Copenhagen—of course!). Their performance that night was something so refreshing and essential to the lifeblood of punk rock; it is through such rebirth that we are stripped down to what matters. Thomas and I talked of this in our interview below. What is critical, more than any sound or politic or thing, is the realization of possibility: that, in the face of impossible inertia and despair, the shake of a hip—a scream, a note—can indeed turn the world upside down and send you spinning.

I had the good fortune to travel with Lack the next couple of days and witness them play a couple more times in Sweden. Before we parted company Thomas, the singer, took the time to write down in my journal a lot of the lyrics they were working on for the upcoming LP (*Blues Moderne: Danois Explosifs*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue). It was a

great pleasure to receive the CD in the mail a year later and hear those lyrics realized and shaped with beautiful, painful, intense music. It's been quite a while since that record was released and Lack has been through a fair bit as a band and as people. It's exactly bands like Lack that keep posthumous issues of *Inside Front* coming, and we thank them. Below is an interview with Thomas conducted just recently from Copenhagen.

As my words have grown more hateful, so has my love gone wilder and untamed / And if I slit any wrist let it be not that of my own, but of the me I am expected to be

Bruce: When Lack works, what makes it work?

Thomas: Musically it works when we manage to take a musical idea and built a structure for it that somehow expresses the essence of the idea; when we exhaust an idea for its useful potential in a way that "works" for us. Personally I think we are best when we create tension primarily through the use of chords and their internal relations, through melody, rather than through the use of rhythm and violence. Because with rhythm you can only go so far in terms of, say, extremity, but with chords and melody (which obviously involves rhythm, but not primarily) there is no limit to how far you can go in your creating expressions.

Furthermore, I think Lack works when lyrics and music complement each other and form a flow, when they support each other. When a certain lyrical point is emphasized or translated by the

music (and vice versa) I am happy because I feel a sense of accomplishment, a sense of having mastered chaos, given it form and a consistency that function.

Finally, I think Lack works when we collectively manage to do something we haven't done before. When we play a show and it just works and everyone is working together, playing together, collectively letting go, collectively becoming expression, then I feel something I rarely do—momentum. When Lack creates that for me, then I think it works.

Bruce: Do conceive of yourselves as a particularly "Danish" or perhaps "Scandinavian" band?

Thomas: If *Refused* had not made their two last records, Lack would not have sounded as we did on *Blues Moderne* LP or the *Sisyphus 7*"—and the same goes for *Breach* and their *It's Me God*. Those bands meant a lot and they were both Swedish. In fact, the whole Swedish rock thing has had a rather big influence on us. But apart from that I don't feel like being a Scandinavian band, musically.

In other ways though, we have experienced what it means to be a Danish band—equipment is extremely expensive, van renting is economy-breaking, rent is devastating, food prices are depressing, recording prices are absurd; the underground is underground and small.

When we wrote mails to people in order to book shows it sometimes felt like writing "Danish" sort of disqualified us from being interesting. In Europe there is hierarchy as well—the west over the east and the north. Just like Americans who 'intuitively' disbelieve that a European (or non-North American) band can offer anything valuable at all—besides being maybe "exotic." So we have experienced that being Danish meant something. But primarily in the beginning of our "international adventures."

In terms of culture and politics, then I think there can be found some elements of being Danish, since we deal with subjects that are particular and related to where we live. Not to say that they can't be translated or be relevant to people who live in other places since I think our songs are relatively easy to relate to, but they are created in our milieu. As an American reader you are not used to living in a genuine welfare state with all its goods and evils. A welfare state which is kind of socialist because of the high taxes and the access to free education with state support and health care, but which is still capitalist because it maintains the right of private property and extremely high prices on everything. There is a rather big labor movement, which used to achieve a lot in the past, but these days they seem so immobile, inactive, and monolithic that you almost suspect that they have cut a deal with their friends in the private and the public sector. Very little is actually happening in the realm of the worker. It is as if the workers' unions are satisfied with the wage system and the whole 40 hours a week rhythm, because they are certainly not doing anything to change it. So people work much more than they have to actually. This makes it rather depressing, because most people are so entangled in the whole career/job thing that there is very little room for anything else.

Denmark is also a country with a very strict sense of what you can do and what you can't. Not only in terms of morality which is actually rather laid back (Denmark is a protestant, almost atheist country, which makes moral systems up for debate in most places), but rather in terms of envy and small-mindedness. It is a little hard to explain, but there is a kind of unarticulated social code which states that you are not supposed to be too much of something, too famous, to believe that you are better than others, that you are worth something. It is an cultural ethic of being humble and you see it everywhere, even in the punk community. A band plays a lot of shows, they get known and suddenly people think they're rock stars, or idiots (I am not talking exclusively about my own band, because this is rather general). The problem with this kind of ethic is that it keeps people in their places, because everyone is so eager to make sure that everyone is not "doing-too-much." It is hard to explain, you have to experience it. But ultimately, this kind of ethic stands in the way for attempts at social change, because people are afraid to believe in themselves and what they actually want for themselves and the world they live in. It creates apathy.

So perhaps, in some aspects we are a Scandinavian band.

It's like being buried alive when our masks become our faces/ It's like being buried alive when our ideals become our tombstones/ Life is too short to die/ Turn away to live again/ In the name of every fallen hero that ever sold out: show me the next exit and I'll be the first to take it

Bruce: What is the role of a collective of artists making music in the revolution?

Thomas: First, I don't think any of us believe in the revolution, but rather in revolutions. Mostly because revolutions happen all the time and revolution doesn't. But also because the revolution has an implicit totalitarian, fascist, tendency to it: you are either for the revolution or you are against it. The wildest revolutionaries in the revolution are either first against the wall or the ones pulling triggers "after" the revolution. But there are multiplicities of revolutions, they happen everywhere and all the time — micro and macro, bad ones, good ones.

Feminists can have revolution now, while Marxists have to wait.

To make a long story short, then, I think the role of the artist is to do what she does as good as she can. To create new feelings or to express old feelings in a new way, to give expression to something unexpressed, to create new worlds and people. I have left shows, movies, books, affected. Sometimes those effects have revolutionized my life and made me make decisions and act in ways I had not thought I ever would. I think the role of the artist is to create affects, to create momentums and to affect us all to create momentums of our own and in our own lives. Ultimately, the artist's "role" is to show that in creation the negative and the positive collide, and once you create you are never "safe"—you must risk... just like in "real" life.

Bruce: What about the danger, in the context of the traditional hierarchical performance, of being "creative specialist" vis-à-vis a mostly "passive" audience? How has Lack worked to alter this? What sort of space does Lack seek to create at its shows?

Thomas: My biggest fear is that we contribute more negativity than positivity. Adorno & Horkheimer said that workers read Donald Duck to learn to live with humiliations, violence, and all the other bad things connected to being of working class. In the same way I fear that Lack can become a medium for accepting despair and hopelessness, because we emphasize these feelings so much in our music. I am a very pessimistic person and since I am the vocal person in the band, both lyrically as well as the one talking in between songs, I often present a very negative approach to the issues we present. And this, I fear, may just create more despair and hopelessness. But, maybe we take ourselves too seriously here... I don't know.

But to answer your question somehow: we try to create a friendly space first of all, because we want people to feel good during the event, a relaxed and open atmosphere to counter the tense and pained atmosphere of the music. It doesn't always work and sometimes we even end up playing hostile shows—but usually not on purpose. Simultaneously, we also try to make the space one of focus, energy, and excitement,

maybe even drama, basically a space for people to indulge in and get lost in. We try to create a passionate space, in order to show that we are as much at the mercy of our passions as we master them—not just the band, but also everyone at the event.

All these ambitions don't always manifest themselves, but sometimes they do. And that is when people react, act and respond, when they "break" the crowd silence and become participants. They may not seize an instrument, but they participate and through that they create a whole new event. When that happens the event becomes a participation-event, instead of a spectator/spectated-event. But this is all very idealized, because mostly we don't even master ourselves when we play, so to master transforming the entire event on our own is almost out of our hands. But we do pay attention to the whole cliché-ridden formula of "rock band rocking out on stage" and the fundamental boredom implicit in this spectacle that we have witnessed again and again.

More concrete initiatives: we have poster the lyrics on the wall behind the drums for everyone to see, thus making the vocalist as much an interpreter of the words as the audience; we have addressed people directly without microphone, which only works in small crowds, but creates a more intimate space; we have made fun of ourselves—"over-posing"—thus adding irony to the dead seriousness of the whole event. Small stuff...

Bruce: How would you define the tension between Lack as a live performance and Lack as a pre-recorded commodity, a CD to be bought and sold?

Thomas: We sound better on record. But, of course, there is much more vitality and immediacy in the live performance, much more intensity. But most important, it is unique, whatever happens only happens once—even if you tape it, in which case you only get a mediated, translated version of the event. It happens here, now! And we better pay attention because in a while it is gone, and that is it! Just like life. A recording is much more of an object. An object you may have a detailed and rich relation to, but an object nonetheless—a thing.

This does not mean that a thing can't affect, it can, and sometimes you can even create exactly the expression you want with a studio recording, because you can work on it until it's there—undisturbed by drunk idiots, sound problems (oh, the sound problems), breaking strings, lacking electricity or just the static electricity biting your lips as you approach the microphone.

But then there is another danger: what is the "true" version of a song—I always tend to compare a recorded version with a live performance (or the other way round). I remember watching Snapcase destroy their own intensity and songs in a live performance, and



it really made me sad, because I had expected so much from them. If you can't live up to your own recording you endanger yourself—or conversely, if you rely on performance and volume, your recordings are going to lack. I often try to imagine a band that refuses to record—how would that work out?

Bruce, you once told me that you watched a movie so good that had you known this and prepared yourself for it, it would have been the last movie you ever saw. I sometimes get that feeling with a live show: "tonight could have been the last time—I could have walked away from it and not looked back. Because it was so perfect." I never get that feeling with a record. Never.

When the most honest of emotions turns into a commodity, this can't be a surprise/ This can't be/ No/ But I never stopped demanding/ I am more thirsty than ever/ If this shall make my heart the loneliest: so be it

Bruce: What role do pessimism and hope play in the struggle of everyday life, in attempting to change the world we live in?

Thomas: Hope is treacherous, but perhaps necessary. Treacherous because when it comes to radical politics it is often focused on non-existent things, say the Revolution or "someday someone is going to do something" or "someday this suffering will end" or the "what I am doing is very important" activist kind of thing. Hope can create illusions. But worst of all, hope can break you, because if you have

a deep-felt hope in something and it doesn't work or happen, your hope will die and then what have you left? You can either create more hope in something else or you can just give up and become a realist. Get a job in the bureaucracy. But hope is very important at the same time, because it is a drive, a motivational force. Hopeless people need desire, desperation, or pure despair in order to act, because you need something to make the machine function. If there is no hope at all, then what is the point to try at all?

Pessimism is the feeling of anticipating the worst or seeing in everything only confirmations of the notion that everything is fucked up. I have been a pessimist my entire life and I still fight it as hard as I can. I don't think it has any positive role to play in a struggle except draining energy and imposing the realist, defeatist attitude. But again, if things are fucked up then it is very easy to become pessimistic. But it is important that you learn to

leave that feeling behind or it may prevent you from acting because "it doesn't matter anyway, it's all fucked up, it's too late, it has always been too late, we are already dead."

Bruce: What might Lack's escape plan look like?

Thomas: I have no clue at all. The anarchist liberation of desire founded on a gift economy and mutual aid?

Bruce: Is punk rock still a legitimate medium?

Thomas: Yes. But only if it refuses to be fully signified and captured by repetition, boredom, commodity fetishism and capitalist machines. Punk rock is transformative, expansive, it follows a line of flight when it is most ambitious and daring and this gives it continuous potential to be an alternative. Refused was a line of flight for a while (until they became a fetish), because they dared to defy definitions and rules. Punk rock is legitimate to me, because of its relentlessness, because it doesn't care, it doesn't want to be understood and accepted, continuously becoming flight. The creativity of punk rock makes it a legitimate medium for me, not necessarily because of the punk rock aesthetic, which is often boring, but rather because of the explosive, intense blossoming all over the place. The fact that you can start a punk band, or any band basically, without any pre-established musical capabilities, start playing and do things without having to suck up to anyone, is still a valid justification for punk

in my book. The whole DIY network—that you can play music or whatever without having to surrender to mechanisms of "big business" is another valid justification as well.

Of course there is bullshit in punk, and lots of it. But these days, I prefer to look on the positive, creative aspects of the whole "movement" instead of focusing on bad, negative, useless aspects. It's like a dialogue based on association instead of discussion and "conflict": you create something, someone else is inspired by it and creates something else, which again inspires someone who suddenly inspires the first one back. A flow instead of dead ends. Punk rock's biggest asset is the emphasis on the possibility of the impossible and if nothing else, then this makes it valid for me, because that is exactly what we need these days: to experience that we CAN do things differently and the impossible does in fact happen. And very often indeed.

Bruce: What is the next step for Lack?

Thomas: I don't really know for sure. Music wise, we are definitely finished with the whole *Blues Moderne* vibe. I don't think we can ever write a song like those again and we don't want to either. We are just so worn out by it by now. Not that we don't like it, we just desperately need to readjust our creative focus in order to do anything at all. So we have begun writing new stuff and it is definitely an interesting process, because we are working with different musical tools than what we are used to. It is very challenging and exciting. So far we have written some songs that we are actually pleased with.

I think we will record another full-length someday, and then we will probably do the tour thing—maybe try to avoid all the catastrophes this time. But when exactly is very open. We might have a secret record coming up.

We played with the thought of having a small book to compliment the next record, but we are extremely lazy so let's see if it happens. Personally, I want to emphasize the political content of our music in a different way than the usual "speaking between songs" thing, which doesn't always work that well. I think that all of our songs are basically political, but I want to emphasize this even more in the future.

Numbed by what you call your life/ Show me you're alive.../ To my generation: I dare you to give me something more than this/ Or have we given in?

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An Introduction: THE DENIAL

The reader is encouraged to recall to mind Greg Bennick's (juggler, filmmaker, former singer of Trial) column in the last Inside Front on an Iron Maiden show he had just attended and his skillful, smooth transition to his then-recent reading of *The Denial of Death*, discussed below. The Iron Maiden anecdote made us laugh, and his eloquent discourse on death-driven anxiety sent us to the sofa, face down, to weep.¹

Since his reading of *The Denial of Death*, Greg has taken these ideas and run quite a ways in the last three years. It was my intention with the following interview to follow the trajectory of Becker's ideas first germinating in Greg's head to his auspicious meeting with Patrick Shen, who went on with Greg to make their film *Flight from Death: The Quest for Immortality*, a documentary based around many of the ideas Becker discussed, to the completion of the triumvirate with the meeting of Professor Sheldon Solomon. It was with Prof. Solomon that the World Leaders Project was formed, in which Becker's ideas were given radically pragmatic shape and taken out into the world, literally to its leaders, to discuss and understand their consequences in our everyday lives.

I highly encourage anyone interested in the ideas to track down any of the books we discussed and especially to keep on the lookout for *Flight*.

¹ It is known, from inside sources, that Greg originally intended to write that issue's (#13) column on the sinister and widespread rhyming of the words "fire" and "desire" in the last century's go at pop music. In this airing of our dirty laundry Greg was going to oust our own house band, Catharsis, for yes, their unashamed rhyming of these very words and mercilessly compare this action to any number of pop acts from the past. And in 2003 the recent top ten hit "Your Body is a Wonderland" rhymes, you guessed it, these same menacing words! Greg, perhaps sensing the already condemning Al Burián "No Stars" review of Catharsis's *Passion LP*, later in the same issue, tactfully dropped the fire/desire controversy in favor of waxing hilarious on his love of metal.

Sunrise, reading, Trial tours, Filmmaking and Death Anxiety

What's so bad about the fear of death?

The terror of death. The terror of knowing that one day, from unforeseeable circumstances, you shall die. You shall perish from the Earth never to exist again. You inhabit a dying, decaying body—a machine processing matter—eating, digesting, shitting. Animals, bleeding, mating, suffering, dying. No—this is not the sum of your existence, you are a human! You are valuable, your life has meaning. You are in possession of a soul, of Reason. You can conceive not only of this world, but a cosmos—a new life, a better world. You, human being, are a duality, possessed of your withering dying body with a finite number of seconds left before decaying to dust, and of a unique ability to imagine the world outside of that body, to imagine eternity, transcendence. What are the consequences of this duality? What is born of the tension between

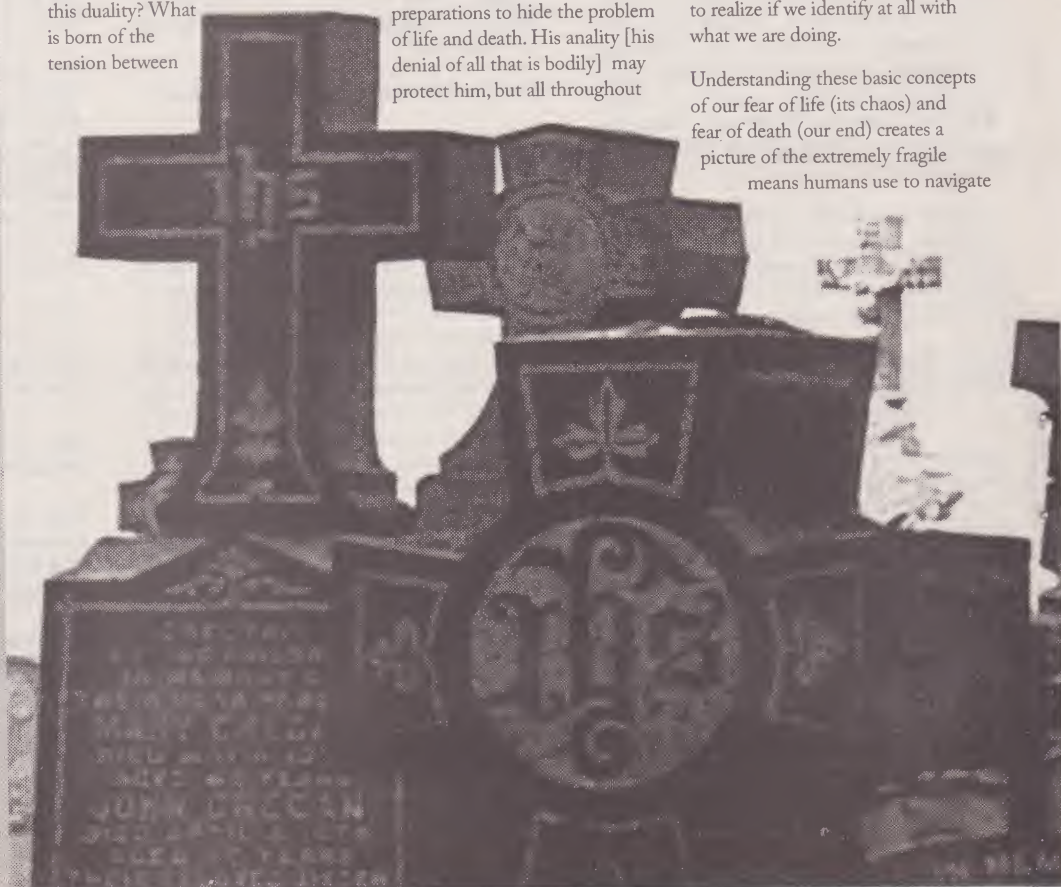
this tragically temporal descending and eternal longing?

In the early 1970's a cultural anthropologist, Ernest Becker, attempted to tackle and understand this duality. In his monumental *Denial of Death* he examines the fear of death as the root cause of all of humankind's actions. However, Becker concluded this fear of our death is too much for most to bear on a daily basis, so we create all sorts of systems and means of drowning out the terror of reality. Becker understood this in terms of immortality-striving. Architecture, religion, ideologies, governments, works of art, social interactions, raising children, wars are all in some way manifestations of our need for permanence, our need to transcend the sad temporality of our existence. Becker even proposed the chaos of a menial job as the perfect "forgetting" of the unmanageable, true chaos of life². This fear of death is so encompassing in every movement of our lives that often it seems it isn't even there. Becker wrote, "even if the average man lives in a kind of obliviousness of anxiety, it is because he has erected a massive wall of preparations to hide the problem of life and death. His anxiety [his denial of all that is bodily] may protect him, but all throughout

history it is the "normal, average men" who, like locusts, have laid waste to the world in order to forget themselves."

Humankind, as far as we know, is unique in its realization of its inevitable death and likewise unique in its reach beyond it. Everyday life is characterized by our attempts to manage the wild chaos of the world with a series of small fictions known as "self." We create a structure of limits and fabricate an order of who we "are" onto which we can function; a denial that simultaneously allows us to live and denies us so much of what might be possible in our lives. Otto Rank, a disciple of Freud, who later broke ranks with his school and was a central inspiration for *The Denial of Death*, wrote, citing Rousseau, "every human being is equally unfree, that is, we create out of freedom, a prison." Immortality-striving or our immortality projects, whether writing a book or buying a house, are a defiance of our finite existences, they serve on a psychological level to soothe our sundered being. Though it would seem correct to ask first if these immortality projects are positive or negative in nature, it is more critical to realize if we identify at all with what we are doing.

Understanding these basic concepts of our fear of life (its chaos) and fear of death (our end) creates a picture of the extremely fragile means humans use to navigate



OF DEATH

the world, for all around us are "competing" immortality projects on all levels, from the personal to the cultural. Anyone that differs to an extent from our own is a threat. If they worship a different god or they believe anarchism is intrinsically flawed and doomed to failure and you think it the salvation of mankind—one of you is wrong from a relative point of view. This is the crux of the matter, because this very conflict leads to violence: if I deride you, if I cannot convince you of my point of view, if I cannot in some way accommodate your view to mine, to render it harmless—then I must eliminate your point of view, lest my conception of self and my claim to the eternal be shattered. And so often our point of view is simply dictated from a position above and greedily received. Self-definition, which so many of us need in order to cope with life, is offered ready-made, with minimal effort on our part, from leaders—statesmen, priests, authorities on revolution, intellectuals. The lure of accepting these definitions, the surrender of believing oneself to be "presto" an American or a Marxist, with an incredible array of leaders and ideological frameworks and consumer goods to back it up—this denial of our own potential and denial of life,

this pseudo-protection from the terrible reality of our existence—for this so many are prepared to do untold violence again and again.

Bruce: I want to start off by mentioning the story you told after the screening of your film in New York City of how *The Denial of Death* was put in your hands along with two other books, *Man's Search for Meaning*...

Greg: Yeah, that was by Victor Frankl and *Art and Artist* by Otto Rank...

B: Otto Rank, who Becker is so fond of...

G: Yeah, absolutely.

B: What I'm curious about is the process it took for you to finally read *The Denial of Death* and begin to make connections to other ideas in your life already present in the Hardcore Punk scene, the activist scene, and your own personal ideas, etc. How did all this match up with *The Denial of Death* and finally to the point where you are thinking: I need to make a film of this?

G: First and foremost, the film was originally the brainchild of Patrick Shen, who is from Los Angeles, which I'll tell the story of in a moment. But after reading *The Denial of Death*—and I quite clearly remember when I finished reading it—I was in the Trial van, on tour, packed in like a sardine in the back of the van somewhere near Reading, California, driving north to Seattle from San Francisco on the highway. I remember the Sun coming up and I had been reading by flashlight all night long—I read the last lines of the book as the Sun rose. It sounds quite poetic—the Sun has crested this hill, everyone is asleep in the van, I'm by myself reading—it's fantastic—it would have been perfect if I had been reading some Barbara Cartland love novel—but poetic regardless, I remember it clearly. But after reading the book I remember immediately starting to make connections to different areas of my life and to different things I was experiencing. One thing I was acutely aware of from the start was that

Becker through his writing and academic career constantly reminded readers not to turn him or his ideas into some sort of icon. He was always critical of himself in that regard and I took this to heart at the end of the book. And I tried not to take everything he said that spoke truth to me and apply it to every aspect of my life. I definitely made some strong connections: the ways in which people strive in our particular society to achieve wealth and fortune and examining those things from the perspective that they were possibly—and I say possibly, not to say Becker was absolutely right—representative of that person's desire to achieve immortality, that would allow them to live on past their physical body. That suddenly rang true to me. And so looking at world leaders, for example, and the positions of people in power and the dynamics between them and people who don't have power—these things came into sharper focus as seen through the lens of: these are the means people are using to achieve symbolic immortality.

B: Did you make immediately the connection to being an artist, in the terms that Becker lays out in the book?

G: Absolutely, and not to kill the book for anybody but at the end of the *Denial of Death*, Becker wraps up the book by speaking about crafting ourselves, our lives, or an object as art, making our lives as art and offering that, so to speak, to the world at large, or to the "life force" as he says.

("The most that any one of us can seem to do is to fashion something—an object or

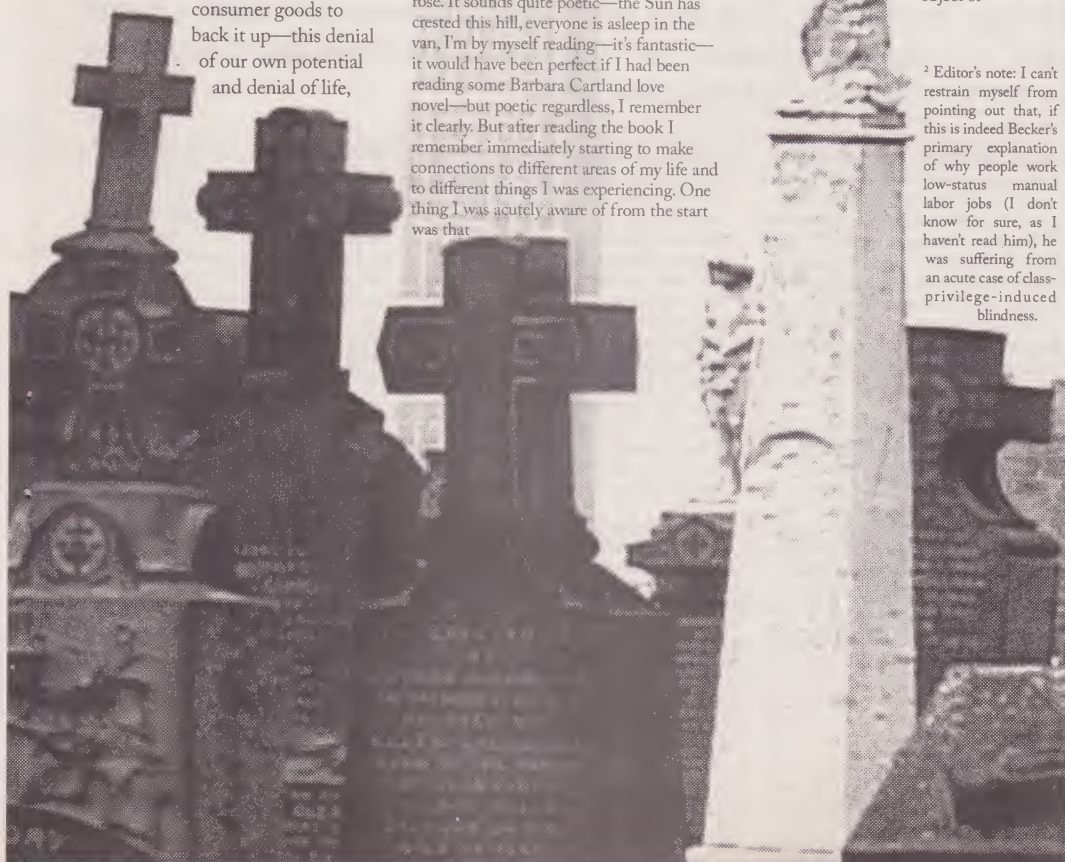
² Editor's note: I can't restrain myself from pointing out that, if this is indeed Becker's primary explanation of why people work low-status manual labor jobs (I don't know for sure, as I haven't read him), he was suffering from an acute case of class-privilege-induced blindness.

from *Death*. Greg and Patrick's film (see the contact details at the end of the interview). The final edit is finally almost ready with Hollywood actor Gabriel Byrne (*End of Days*, *The Usual Suspects*) narrating. It's a beautifully conceived documentary, sharp, accessible and timely. I saw a rough cut at a showing of a slightly earlier edit (with a different narrator) in a lofty apartment in Manhattan last fall, with about forty-odd other people crowding the room (there was a second showing later that night). The skillful presentation of Becker's ideas and examination of violence in our world intended for a widespread audience, without diluting their power, is an excellent example of what can be done by artists driven to create, even in the obscenely constrained and costly world of American film.

Some Recommended Reading:

The Denial of Death by Ernest Becker (The Free Press, New York) Becker's masterpiece is largely accessible, readable, thought-provoking, and even quite entertaining in places. However, he covers some ground that muddles his brilliant ideas; for example, his re-working of Freud's psychoanalytical language and ideas has value, I'm sure, from the point of view of the psychological community, but hinders the overall effect. His long chapter on the Scandinavian philosopher Kierkegaard, though interesting in its own right, has the same consequence. Still, don't let either of these put you off from tracking down this book and engaging with some of the more important ideas of our time.

Art and Artist by Otto Rank (Agathon Press, New York) Rank's illuminating book on the motivations and psychology of the artist and



the "creative urge." This book, first published in 1932 in the US from the ex-communicated disciple of Freud, was the foundation for much of *The Denial of Death*. In fact I believe that at one point Becker states that he is simply trying to make accessible with his book some of these much-neglected ideas of Rank. If you enjoy the sections on the role of the artist in *The Denial of Death* you would do well to follow up with *Art and Artist*. Plus my edition has the bonus of a forward by Anaïs Nin!

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl (Touchstone, New York, Etc.) The first half of the book is made up of a narrative recounting his survival of a German concentration camp in World War II, in which his entire family perished save his sister. He originally wrote this part of the book just months after his release. It's an important account of how he managed to piece together some meaning amidst suffering and, even more chillingly, how the camp represented an intense pared down and focused study of industrial life. The second half of the book is the fleshing out of his ideas in the narrative in what he calls Logotherapy. Conceived 20 years later it is quite detailed and systematic in its approach. A good companion to *The Denial of Death*, especially for those looking for some more tangible answers to the problems raised in that book than Becker sought fit to present.

In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror by Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon, and Jeff Greenberg This is an excellent recent book examining Becker's ideas in a modern context. All three of the authors (I believe) are interviewed in *Flight from Death*, especially in their scientific approach to Becker, and the validation of much of his ideas on death-anxiety through thorough social experiments.

I spoke with Greg by phone from his home in Seattle.

ourselves—and drop it into the confusion, make an offering, so to speak, to the life force.") I connected immediately to that as an artist. For example, at the time we were touring on the *Trial* album, which had just been recorded and released, and I connected to the idea of creating something that was absolutely representative of my thoughts feelings, beliefs and ideals, along with those who were playing music with me as a collective and offering that to the life force. What did that mean to us? What was its significance and on how many different levels could I analyze that significance? One of the most profound ones was that playing in the band and playing shows and creating art was doing something for me on a psychological level and I had never thought of that before. And by psychological, I don't just mean, "Wow, that made me happy," rather it was soothing me, quite literally to be thinking, "I am contributing something that I feel has worth to this world." And in doing so that is making me feel good about my existence and my potential to be "remembered." That's such a superficial way to describe Becker—but something was going on.

B: I think Becker is interesting, too, in that he seems to waver a bit in his evaluation of the artist. For a while he says the ability to create is unmistakably valuable and "in this sense, objective creativity is the only answer that man has to the problem of life." But then he says essentially, well, you know, most people don't have any real talent for art and that's the problem. Too bad. Besides, the artist is trying to swallow the whole world, and I don't know if that is going to work. Becker seems to pull back and hesitate about creativity as a "solution."

G: I think Becker may have also realized that creativity doesn't necessarily mean that you create good things. Creativity leads

human violence, how it leads to wanting to one-up one another, to destroy one another, be the victor, the one who survives—amid the field of corpses lying around us, to be that one who stands strong. He was working on this film and heard about the World Leaders Project, which we can get into in a bit, that I was undertaking with a professor friend of mine in New York, and wanted to do an interview with me for his film and when he called me and we started talking, I realized: Wait a minute, you're doing a film about Becker? And when he heard about the World Leaders Project he said: Wait a minute, you're going to meet face to face with world leaders just to talk about Becker? And so we just instantly hit it off. We decided to help each other out, so that's how I got involved in the film, which was originally Patrick's film, which over the course of the last 18 months got to the point where we were co-producing it, co-writing and working on it in equal shares. It came together because we realized there is much more to Becker than realizing that "Hey, we want to be famous because we recognize that being immortal would be a neat idea." There is a dark underside to the work as well that we wanted to cover in the movie.

B: I don't know if it's going to become a standard question at the Q&A at the end of the film: "So this your immortality project, right?" When someone asks that, and some did at the New York screening as I recall, it presents us with this: Here is something we might consider a "positive" immortality project, not proclaiming to be "the truth", despite all disclaimers, be it your film or Becker's book we nonetheless react in such a way that we are saying to ourselves, well that's not the truth, I know better.

G: That's what's interesting, and again while I say what I'm about to say, I would

way we can communicate otherwise? I believe that there is, but how do we define that? That sharing, reciprocity?

G: I think people need to do this. One thing Becker seems to be saying is, that we're saying in our movie, is that this just isn't something that you get over, that we end, that we do away with. The 'this' being immortality striving and trying to be the one who last and lives longest. Becker's point was that the human animal lives in constant fear of death, at least on some subconscious level. Or rather the human animal is constantly aware of its own death. Keep in mind that we are always working against that or using that information to guide the course of our actions. Becker's suggestion is that these little warfare that go on throughout the day, from the little kid—he uses as an example the kid who says, "Mom, he got a bigger piece of candy than me"—to "You tried to kill my dad, Saddam Hussein, therefore you are next on my list," all of these things can be traced back to death anxiety and that all of them are part and parcel of who we are as people. We are reacting based on the psychology of being a human being. These things are inescapable. I guess the point of Becker that we, as producers of the film *Flight from Death*, have tried to encapsulate in 90 minutes is that all these little pieces of warfare that go on throughout the day and all these huge wars that go on across the world are quite possibly inescapable, but an awareness of these things can help reduce the aggression and hopefully the pain that is associated with them. And again, that's somewhat up to the interpreter. Meaning that there are those who think that pain for a specific cause is quite a fantastic thing. I guess I am representing a majority who would suggest, as a general rule, that hurting or killing others is bad.

B: I believe that in our increasing awareness

...Quite possibly our actions are motivated by a subconscious, innate fear. That creates interesting conversation and I would argue absolutely allows for change of behaviors, or at least less violent and destructive ones. Up until now, with *Flight from Death*, I don't think these ideas have been popularized nearly as much as they could have been.

you for example to do an interview which contributes to what hopefully will be an excellent magazine. But creativity can also mean "Wow, if we all have box cutters and we all get on the plane at the same time we might just be able to fly it into a building." I think Becker realized that striving for immortality isn't always necessarily a good thing. It leads to a lot of issues and problems, terror and violence in the world. It also leads to, dare I say, interesting hardcore records being made!

To finish the answer to the initial question. What the connection was to the film was: Here we have Patrick Shen in Los Angeles. Patrick read *The Denial of Death* completely unassociated with the punk and hardcore music scene. He was blown away by what he read and thought "I need to make a film of this"—he was a filmmaker in L.A. He wanted to make a film looking at the negative effects of striving for immortality. Of how it impacts

like you and your readers to keep in mind what I just got done saying: don't apply Becker to every aspect of our lives, we would just go nuts—"Why am I buying the vegan chocolate candy bar, it must have something to do with immortality?" We could look at the person who ask the question: "Isn't this your immortality project?" with that cocky air, we could look at that person asking that question as living their own immortality project, because in doing so they say, "Well, I obviously know more that you and when all these other idiots are dead and gone, including you, I'll still be around due to my acute sense of thinking and amazing intellect." We could look at this from a million different angles.

B: I find that such an interesting situation. Is that not how we interact in the world? Trying to achieve our immortality on some level through these petty exchanges throughout the day? Is there a real, valuable

of these underlying motivations, the very first simple step of saying, "Hey," nudge nudge", "there is this denial of death thing going on," is so important before you make those larger connections. We're not all yet walking through our day thinking, "Hey, I exist in this duality of my creatureliness and my immortality-striving!"

G: One thing we wanted to do and one thing that we have argued throughout, and I'm not sure at which of the New York screenings this question was raised, the second one I think: "What good does this do in terms of the world at large? What good do these ideas actually have in changing the course of human behavior?" Our answer was, ultimately, just having these ideas on the table helps. Meaning that, granted, we are not going to get rid of the daily battles, we're not going to get rid of people beating the crap out of each other or treating each other unfairly. But realistically, having the thought on the

table, just for discussions, out there for everyone to see. That quite possibly our actions are motivated by a subconscious, innate fear. That creates interesting conversation and I would argue absolutely allows for change of behaviors, or at least less violent and destructive ones. Up until now, with *Flight from Death*, I don't think these ideas have been popularized nearly as much as they could have been. Ernest Becker was suppressed throughout his entire career because of his relationship to Thomas Szasz and those who worked with Becker were ostracized from the psychology community for associating with Becker.

B: Who is Thomas Szasz?

Q: Thomas Szasz at Syracuse University—and as I understand it, readers would do well to research on their own and correct me here, he was against the medicalization of psychology. And I think that what happened was that Szasz was arguing against going toward a space where drugs were prescribed for everything. Which of course means less profits for psychologists. If psychologist can prescribe fancy medication they can drive fancier cars. And get rich. Szasz I think, was saying we need to be looking at psychological problems from a psychological perspective, not medical perspective. And a psychological perspective that looks at the human animal on a social level—almost veering into anthropology. I know that for *Flight from Death*, we interviewed one of Szasz's and Becker's friends, a psychotherapist from NY and he told pretty much the same story, that Becker and Szasz were ostracized and continue to be frowned upon by the psychology community. And I guess that the end result of that is, that Becker puts out this book, *The Denial of Death*, which is no piece of trash, it won the Pulitzer Prize and how many people have even heard of the book? We've encountered a handful, 20 or 30, who have come to us over the last year and said, "Oh guys, you're making a movie about this? It's a great book, I read it in college." But we've talked to thousands of people.

Stomach Cramps, Faith, and James Bond

B: Becker pokes fun at himself at the beginning of the book, writing that all the great ideas already have books about them. How dare I throw another book in there, another weighty tome no one will read?

Q: Exactly.

B: He's obviously hopeful that that won't be the end of it.

Q: Of course it's honorable of him to say, I'm writing this book, but don't give it a second glance, it's nothing. I'm sure that Becker knew however that this was going to be a colossal piece of work and a discussion piece for generations to come. His own immortality project. And it doesn't take anything away from the people who encounter these ideas as new and are incredible advancements on ideas they maybe have heard before.

B: In terms of the everyday results of these fears, near the end of the book Becker cites a haunting story told by Otto Rank

of this woman who comes in with stomach cramps, with no apparent medical cause, to Otto Rank's office. Rank questions her: She lives with her married sister in this cute alpine village, has no great love, great passion, but has a "good" life. However she has a vague feeling that she is missing out on something. But things are good, you're happy, you spend the summer in country, Rank tells her. And then he suggests, Hey, let's not figure out what's causing those stomach cramps. Whatever revelation about those cramps we happen upon will probably make you more miserable. There is a certain amount of pain we must endure in order to live in this world. Maybe we shouldn't solve this one problem, maybe this is the price you are paying to go about your life in this tolerable manner? That reminded me of a thing Becker wrote earlier in the book, where he wonders how these workers survive in chaotic restaurants or hectic factories or travel agencies in tourist season. Then he says the answer is obvious. This chaos resembles life, but the job is a manageable chaos. Rank I think was insisting on the same thing: your stomach cramps are a manageable pain—what we would uncover if we really stopped to consider the problem, the chaos of life or your undisclosed loss, might be too much. The question that raises for me, especially in the context of our revolutionary project, our desire for change, is how much do we ask of people? How many of these stomach cramps do we really wish to cure? What would we unleash?

Q: Meaning what would we unleash if all these things were gone?

B: What are we asking of people when we are asking them to give up their stomach cramps? Becker notes that if you are going to remind people of an unmediated joy, you must also remind them of the terrible despair that can accompany that joy. It makes me question the refrain of "Hey, everyone, there's this great thing going over here! Quit your crappy day job—there is joy out there!" It's not that simple, but I wonder what happens then.

Q: It reminds me of what anyone in the course of my life has ever said to me when talking about ideas like Becker's or the example of "Hey, consider quitting your job and pursuing your passion." And that example is just an example, certainly not the key to your salvation. Using that idea, people rejoin with, "Well who's going to sweep the streets, wash the dishes, scrape the elephant cage?" What else do we create when we create this "heaven" on earth? Becker hints at it throughout the book, when he's talking about "whose

heaven on earth?" One thing that's come up when making this film, is that we're saying people can strive to create a better, more beautiful world by being aware of their own immortality project. Doesn't that simultaneously open the door for people to say, "Hey, you're right, let's all die for a cause and kill tons of people because what we're trying to do with our belief system is the 'right' thing to do and it's going to create a beautiful world and a passionate world, and I don't need to work anymore!?" Yeah, we potentially open up a huge can of worms, I don't think there is such a thing as a perfect, an ideal world, where we're all living ominously and beautiful. And that is sort of ominous and upsetting. To be

honest I don't see any example of a life that is completely passionate and without sadness and a heavy heart at times, or without tragedy or terror or horror. I think that's what keeps the human animal in balance and moving

forward. I think it's almost healthy in a way. The ultimate question for me becomes, How do we take all that, and instead of ending up on the floor, a quivering blob of protoplasm unable to function, or knife wielding maniac running through a shopping mall—how do we take that information and create an existence for ourselves that is nurturing, and that isn't destructive toward other people, and is fun and enjoyable and gives something beautiful to human existence? Again it's all a matter of interpretation.

B: There was some criticism at the Q&A that you were portraying religion in this terrible light in the film—that you just showed that all religions universally contribute to the denial of death and the seeking for immortality in this very fanatical, harmful, way, the repression of others. In the sense of everything having a positive and negative shadow, when you were making the film and examining religion and ideology, trying to understand this really negative affect that it has had, what was the positive shadow of religion? Becker seems to come to a lot of religious conclusions, despite the scientific rigor of his work. But connected to the film...

Q: We had to be acutely aware of that the whole time. Neither Patrick or I connect strongly to any particular religion and in fact I have a strong critique of religion, on a personal level. But in making the film, we didn't necessarily want to define our film

by our personal belief systems so much as we wanted to look at the larger picture. And the larger picture turned out to be: Let's look at religions critically, but let's not look at them critically exclusively. Let's look at them critically along with all other institutions that are similar, look at them all in the same light. Instead of saying, Religion is something to be really aware of because of its contribution to violence, let's look at all these institutions that we engage in our culture and take a look at their contribution towards violence and their effect on human psychology on different levels. What do they all have to contribute? In doing that, we leveled the playing field. We made religion and capitalism and all the others that we covered, equal players in this world, in this social construction. And in terms of looking at religion in that regard, we were able to say, what religion does is it gives people a sense of self worth, of hope, faith in something greater than yourself, soothes that part of human beings that quite possibly fears that this abstract existence is really ridiculous and meaningless, which is almost too much for most people to bear. Religion soothes that part of the human psyche, but taken to another level, it causes people to react and do crazy things, to suppress other people. As Becker suggests in the book, and as we explore in the film, it causes people to want to beat the crap out of each other. Ultimately, and I'm drawing on the work of Sheldon Solomon, my partner in the World Leaders Project—if there's somebody of belief system A in a room and somebody of belief system B comes into a room, well, the two of them can't both be right. So who ultimately wins out? There has to be one that wins, because neither will except that they are both wrong. And that's the underside of religion. What we were doing in the film was saying, yeah, but that's also the underside of patriotism, of capitalism, of communism, of all of those things.

B: It seems that part of a possible solution to achieve a more desirable existence—and I don't know if there is a real solution—but Becker seems to conclude that faith plays a large part of it, something higher than yourself. He goes on to describe Kierkegaard's "knight of faith." I wonder if we must view this faith, whether in god, an idea, or a "life force", in terms of subservience to that idea, ourselves as part of a greater whole? I feel like Becker was understanding that ideal of faith in terms of subservience. Is faith necessarily a subservient action?

Q: Becker, over the term of his life and the book, seems to be pretty atheistic. Becker at the age of forty nine was diagnosed with stomach cancer, and he died relatively quickly. On his deathbed, he was interviewed by Sam Keene, who was at the time working for "Psychology Today" magazine, and Keene is actually interviewed in our film as well, we met with him in California. To Sam Keene he says that he had returned to Judaism while he was dying. Patrick and I actually visited Becker's grave in Massachusetts and there is a Star of David on it and the words on were definitely indicative of a man who was born and who certainly died a Jew. I think that quite literally Becker might have gotten scared toward the end of his life. And said to himself, Wow, what if this academic approach I've taken is



right, and all we have is this psychological construct of some type of future and that doesn't offer much solace. I imagine that he saw some good in subjecting oneself to a higher power and went for it—and if it soothes the dying man in the painful throes of cancer, then that is a great thing. But I don't think he necessarily said that we have to be subservient to it. I know that when Patrick and I were trying to draw a closing to our film, we looked at Einstein who said that science is going to drop you on the doorstep of religion at some point. And here's a guy who examined every micron of the universe. He still found more and more questions, and less and less concrete answers. I think that Becker, along those same lines, realized that there are no definite answers, in terms of what do with our faith, as long as we continually remember our humanness, our immediate worldly existence and don't just blindly step into that faith hoping that it's going to take over and answer all our questions for us. Becker was pretty aware that you can be soothed by something larger that is out there. But always remember that you are a human as well and there are very human issues going on here.

B: It seems what Becker wanted to make room for in the world, next to faith, is the

things about my life, and not my life as different from anybody else's, but my life because it's all I really know, is how much is fucking hurts to be me sometimes, and simultaneously how blissful it feels to be me sometimes. How sometimes those things are as intertwined as two people making love. How close the gut-wrenching pain and the absolute bliss are intertwined. That's part of the deal: Once you pop out into the world, that's what you get, that simultaneous pain/bliss. Joseph Campbell said that life is like an opera—imagining the power and passion of an opera—except that the opera hurts and we are in it, neck deep. That's what we get for being living people. In the last couple of years and the more I work on the film, I find it more and more potent to think of my life in those terms. When I was working on the lyrics for the Trial records, that just came up constantly, all the journal entries, the heartbreak, coinciding and clashing and working in absolute symbiosis with all the joy, happiness, and triumph.

B: That seems to connect to Becker's idea of Heroism. Becker understood much in these terms. In the introduction I really like something he seemingly just drops in—"The urge to heroism is natural and to

B: I think he was much more sympathetic to the basic urge toward heroism, rather than encouraging the idea that people should be James Bond. I think he wants us all running through the streets, that sort of thing, drunk on life.

C: Absolutely. Realistically, at the expense of offending Vaneigem or anybody who's read him and got really excited about it—I did for one—a fulfilled life doesn't necessarily entail living every passion. I would be satisfied if everybody on the planet lived a little more passionately. I would be satisfied if individuals would just get a little more in touch with the things they want to do, a little more in touch with the psychology of what makes them tick and behave the way they do. I think that would be a huge colossal improvement over the status quo. Even individual examples of that make me really excited. In terms of the punk-activist community, yeah, absolutely, the options are all there. What about in terms of other subcultures that are perhaps not as inundated with examples of passionate living and artistic expression? I would love to see people in those cultures say I can improve my life immensely by doing *this*. Whatever that thing might be. As Patrick and I were talking about who our audience is, we made the decision to

that relationship about? I was listening to a lecture given by a guy named Sheldon Solomon, who ended up being a terrific, amazing friend of mine. Sheldon made reference in his lecture—this was during the whole Bush/Gore vote scandal and mayhem—that maybe we should let Bush and Gore know that their striving to get the most votes was a good example of their striving for immortality. He intended it as a joke in his lecture. I went up to him afterwards and said, "How about we write to Bush and Gore and how about we write to every other leader on the planet and suggest that we would love to give them insight into the nature of leaders and the nature of followers." And using that insight, that insight of death anxiety, that people often enjoy being leaders and followers, and how that might help diminish violence worldwide, being that the leaders are often the folks guiding policy over the majority. The World Leaders Project absolutely stemmed from reading Becker. From trying to apply something real-world. You know, and your readers know, we all know in the punk/hardcore music community that risk we run is just shouting, screaming, hitting guitars, and making sounds that fulfill the needs of the ears, eyes, and minds of those who expect those types of sounds, without making anything happen. By happen I

Joseph Campbell said that life is like an opera—imagining the power and passion of an opera—except that the opera hurts and we are in it, neck deep. That's what we get for being living people. I found that in the last couple of years, and the more I work on the film, I find it more and more potent to think of my life in those terms. When I was working on the lyrics for the Trial records, that just came up constantly, all the journal entries, the heartbreak, coinciding and clashing and working in absolute symbiosis with all the joy happiness and triumph.

idea that there is mystery in the world, whether that mystery is in Judaism or an idea of a living Earth.

C: When he says we create out of art or our lives an object and drop it into the confusion, make an offering of it to the life force, I don't think he's imagining the life force as some little deity with a beard running around in the clouds. I've interpreted it as the collective existence of living things and the collective experience of being alive, its awesomeness. We craft this interview and throw it out there and see what it does. And if turns out that people read this interview and run out into the streets and kill each other, well, then we look at that and ask ourselves, "Why is this going on?" We might look at it throughout the lens of death anxiety and adapt our behaviors accordingly; to at least use that idea, that lens as a means of making the world a better place.

B: That quote from Becker that you just cited (offering our creation to life) reminds me so much of Nietzsche's dancing star line from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "I say unto you, one must still have chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves." The idea that, essentially, there is something to give to the world.

C: That idea that you talked of earlier, that it might be born of a state of chaos—I think that one of the most beautiful

admit it is honest; for everyone to admit it would release such pent up force as to be devastating to societies as they are now." That idea reminded me of Raoul Vaneigem writing in *The Revolution of Everyday Life* how much sympathy he had for this man driving home from work and at each light he is imagining himself some sort of hero or another, James Bond, etc. This is going on all around you, people yearning for a sense of heroism and meaning, even if in such bland terms as James Bond. I wonder if we are standing on the brink of people granting that to themselves.

C: I would hope so.

B: I think Becker is convincing in arguing that so-called primitive societies were successful in structuring themselves in such a way that people could feel satisfied in that urge toward heroism and meaning. And hopefully in our activist and punk and all the greater cultures are also developing ways of interacting that can give people voice and space for those yearnings.

C: Or even non-punk and non-activist subcultures. I think that ultimately striving for the heroic doesn't dictate Vaneigem's example of imagining that they are James Bond. You don't have to be James Bond and having sex with Halle Berry to be a hero.

get this into the hands of as many people as possible, because we, like you, saw that Becker was on to something. And while we shouldn't encase it in a solid gold ark, we feel people across the board could benefit from what he had to say and from reflecting on his ideas.

The World Leaders Project

B: The World Leaders Project (WLP), was that something that stemmed out from your reading of Becker? Or was that something that had been brewing and those ideas are what made it grow?

C: As someone who has looked upon the structure of politics as something a little bit weird, that hundreds of millions of people elect one little person to represent them—a little weird. I'm saying "just a little weird" so we don't have to go into what's the right system of politics, blah blah blah. A little strange. Just the idea that somebody else speaks for me, a little weird. When I started to read Becker I wondered, what is the death psychology of a leader? And what is the relationship to the follower? And what are they doing for each other? Not just the leader saying, "Followers you make me feel like a god." Rather, each of the followers saying, "Wow, it feels really good to be a follower. There are so many other followers and I don't need to stick my neck out, that guy over there is doing it for me. Because I elected him." What's

mean, and no pun intended, cathartic change, some feeling, action or change, real change. Not just people jumping around—which of course could be real change for some folks—but I wanted to take the ideas of Becker and take them out of an academic arena and say okay, let's put him in the political arena and let's not just put him in the ideological political arena, let's go talk to some folks. And have those folks be world leaders and meet them face to face. And hit them with these ideas and share these ideas with them and not just from the perspective of, "we have all the answers," but put them on the table and see what happens. Our meeting with the president of Guyana was unbelievable because he actually listened to us.

B: You and Sheldon had written him a letter—and Patrick...

C: Yeah, we wrote every leader in the world. Sheldon and I wrote the letter. And Sheldon, Patrick, and I wrote a document that described our ideas, that we sent out to all those who responded. Meeting with the president of Guyana was fantastic, because he listened. I think it would be naive to think that he would walk away from the meeting and went out and bought *Denial of Death* and went to flightfromdeath.com and watched our trailer for the movie and pre-ordered the DVD. That would be ridiculous. All I wanted for that meeting was to go in and say, here are a couple of books, here are some thoughts to think

about. Tell us a little bit about Guyana, what goes on down here? How's life down here? What is existence like here? To be totally honest, living in Seattle I have no idea. And Patrick, he was filming the whole time, but living in L.A., he had no idea and Sheldon living in New York had no idea. Tell us about Guyana and how can we help each other to create a better place? A place where suffering isn't as widespread. Again we are not going to get rid of suffering, but there is a lot of suffering and violence that don't need to be there. So how can we diminish violence in our two cultures by looking at it through the lens of Becker's ideas? Tremendous, to have that conversation was just fantastic.

B: And what did he say initially? Was he stumbling or what?

G: No, no. He agreed with us, looking over the document, human beings being motivated toward violence because the fear of death was quite possibly part of the problem. He added that racial relations and economic issues were at the heart of much of their violence. We talked a bit about his. By the end of the meeting though, it wasn't a situation where he where he smiled through his teeth and said have a nice day, goodbye, but actually invited us back and said that he himself would set up a speaking engagement for us at the University of Guyana. So Sheldon and I are going to go back and lecture something this year. We're in the midst of working out which dates, then we will get in touch with President Bharrat Jagdeo and make it happen again. It was awesome for me after preaching to the choir for years and years, to take the ideas in a very non-traditional way out into the world. And see what happens. Again, craft something and offer it to the world and see what comes of it.

B: That experience of taking yourself out of your familiar surroundings, what you saw

band and gave me your record and I never listened to hardcore and I don't really like the music but it made me think about this time in my life when... fill in the blank. Some experience in their life, whether their girlfriend was raped or their parents died in a car crash. Whatever made them happy or sad or terrified, but by some crazy method of that record getting to them, it changed their life. I thought to myself, it changed their life, and on some small level we have a great conversation. I thought to myself, with the WLP, okay, we hand these books to the president of Guyana, he goes on with his day and has 40 more meetings, let's say. He goes on with his year and has 40,000 more meetings. Well, what happens at the next CARICOM meeting, where Caribbean leaders talk about economics? What if, what if he rubs elbows with some other leader that triggers something in his brain about something that we talked about and introduced him to and those two guys get into a conversation. Or what if by whatever freak incidence, the G8 leaders are getting together and the president of Guyana happens to be there and rubs elbows with George Bush or one of the other global political heavyweights, and they share ideas based on this conversation. You know, what if. And to be totally honest, to see this have happened again and again and again with Trial I thought to myself, what's the difference between the president of Guyana and a punk rock girl in North Carolina? What's the difference? There's no difference in that they are people, experiencing life. Maybe in individual ways, but also in the same sorts of ways: They want to understand the world. And they want to understand their lives and make them better and they are going to encounter other people and work together to make those things happen. I thought to myself, this is brilliant! Again, I'm not saying that I'm the brilliant one, you would have to put that in Becker's hands for getting all those notes down. The

of Terror. What we would like to do is tour, Patrick, Sheldon and myself—and I mean tour. Ultimately, I would like to tour from colleges to the palaces of presidents and prime ministers, Sheldon speaking about his book on terror and Patrick and I showing the film and integrating all of that; since Sheldon, Patrick and I have become this WLP triumvirate, we would like to share these ideas all at the same time. Granted, when we get our next meeting with a world leader, whoever that might be, we're not going to be in a situation most likely where we can show a 90 minute film, have them read a 100-plus page book, and talk about it. But at least we'll have those kinds of ideas in mind.

B: Where does the film stand now in production? Is the final edit done?

G: Near done, Patrick is working on it as we speak and we have spent this week that we are interested in having narrate the film. [A Hollywood actor, Gabriel Byrne, was brought on board for this task in March.] We have a whole list of folks we are pursuing. We are utilizing a number of contacts we have made in the last year to get screenings and to find a distributor. Between Patrick and myself, we have managed to arrange a few more screenings. This year we'll be in Edmonton, Alberta, at a conference called Culture and the State, which is going to be in May of 2003. We'll screen it in Seattle in March in conjunction with a lecture by Robert J. Lipton. We'll screen most likely in Houston as well. Also, in Michigan, there will be a weekend long series of events: Sheldon, then our film, then all of us talking collectively about Becker. We have gone that route in terms of trying to set up individual screenings, but also utilize the contacts we have made to set up distribution for, hopefully, national and international TV releases and movie theaters.

There was one stretch of 20 days where we slept between and hour and half and three hours a night to finish this thing. One day we worked quite literally 22 and half hours on our film. State of mania. Since we got the rough cut finished, since the NY and Seattle screenings, I was able to kick back a bit and focus on some other stuff. I am always of course doing juggling and entertaining stuff, which is my true passion in life, I love it. I'm going to be doing some speaking dates on my own at some colleges on the East Coast. That's stuff I love, too, talking to audiences. And it's actually quite fun doing it without a band, there aren't nearly as many things to worry about. But I'm also neck deep in trying to help the Western Shoshone Nation with whatever I can, helping to resolve their land dispute with the US government. A dispute that has been going on for about 150 years or so now. I just got back from a trip, an interesting trip when you look at the clash of cultures through the lens of Becker. Native Americans and Euro-Americans are a great example to look at when belief systems and ideology clash. I was very fortunate to be able to drive a van load of Shoshone elders to Rapid City, SD for a meeting between them and Lakota tribal officials to form alliances on various political issues. The first time, as I understand it, that Lakota and Shoshone officials have met since the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. An awesome experience heightened by being inundated with all this immortality thinking and belief system clashes. I got to ponder first hand, Wow, what's the effect of a dominant invader? What do people do in response to it? What questions can we ask in terms of fear of death and the systems they create to maintain a sense of lasting permanence? Fascinating. Throwing fire machetes and bean bags around, helping the Shoshone, movies, and talking to world leaders. That pretty much keeps me happy.

...What's the difference between the president of Guyana and a punk rock girl in North Carolina? What's the difference? There's no difference in that they are people, experiencing life. Maybe in individual ways, but also in the same sorts of ways: They want to understand the world. And they want to understand their lives and make them better and they are going to encounter other people and work together to make those things happen. I thought to myself, this is brilliant!

there, then coming back to your home and Seattle and saying to yourself, what next? Has it made you push for more or see how things that were done before might not have been working so well?

G: Push for more, absolutely, I would say since summer of 2002 I have been relentless in terms of wanting more and getting more. Getting more—I'm not talking about cars and diamond rings, I'm talking about seeing how far I can go in terms of creativity and developing ideas and talking them out of traditional, for me, realms and modes of thought. The World Leaders Project blew the doors wide open. I think just to have on the table those ideas, in the President of Guyana's hands, reminded me of all the times that after working on the Trial record for a year, recording the album and putting it out into the world—times where somebody would come up to me after a show and say, you know, my friend's brother is into your

brilliant thing is, this could really work. The effect that we desired in terms of bringing about some change and the lessening of violence was that this trickle down effect could happen on the scale of world leaders. You know what, if I am naïve to think that, so be it. I was also naïve to go out and waste my voice almost to the point of not ever being able to speak again in hopes that it would help people deal with rape or sexually transmitted diseases or the loss of a spouse through punk rock: and I saw that time and time again, a hundredfold. That's just one kind of channel, one ray of light opened to me, through the success of the WLP.

B: Your strategic plan with *Flight from Death* is that something that is becoming intimately connected to the WLP?

G: Sheldon has just put out a brilliant book, *In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology*

B: Is there going to be a DVD release?

G: Absolutely. We are going to finish this film. For frame of reference in case someone picks this 'zine or interview up in 2012, I'm talking about this film is done, March 1st 2003. When we secure all the money to do all the things we like in terms of packaging and extra things on the DVD, we'll do a release as soon as possible.

B: I'm really curious what else you have on the table? I can see how these things would dominate your life, but do you have any other projects?

G: Those are the main things I do. *Flight from Death* in the second half of 2002 took on an entirely new focus and dedication. In August, September, and October of 2002 Patrick and I were working so hard on that film I actually ended up in a doctor's office, I thought I was dying of a heart attack.

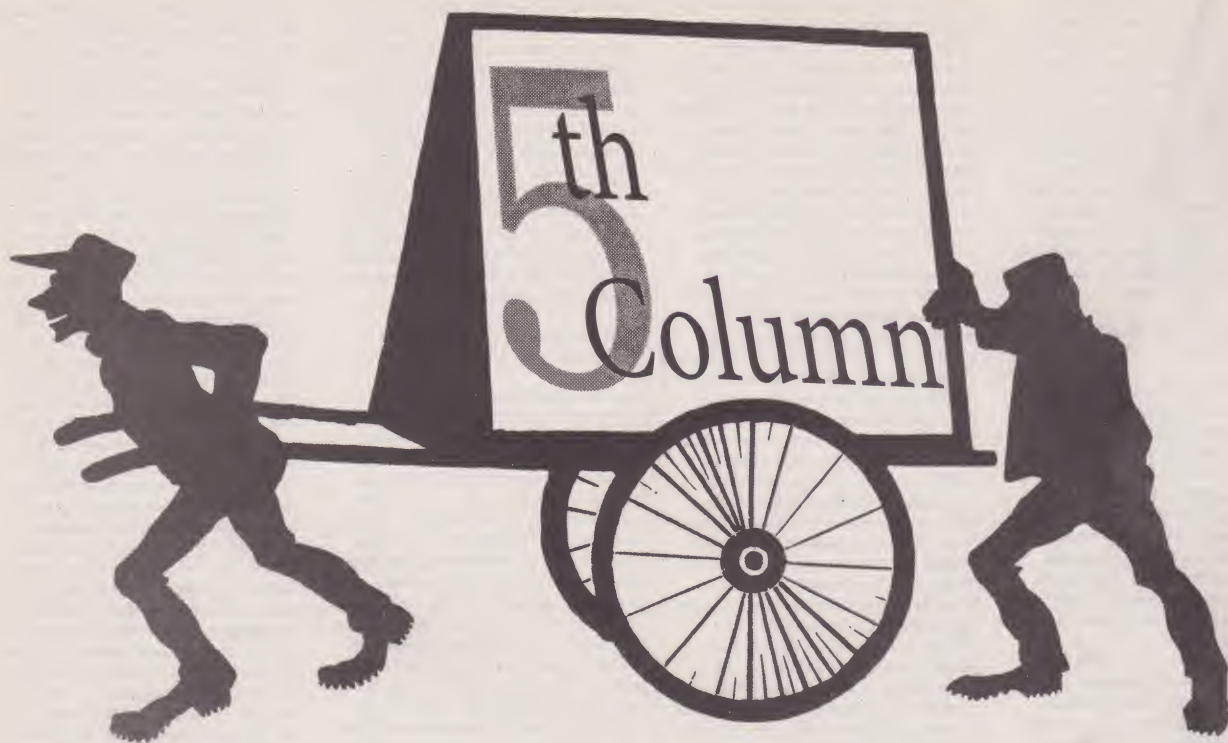
I know I want as much out every second of my life as I can possibly get. Because one of the things that reading Becker has done to me is to make me acutely aware of the fact that yeah, I'm going to die. Just a matter of time before I'm worm food. The past year has just made me intense in terms of wanting more and more and more out of life. Limitless passion—all the stuff just gives me a sense of being alive that in my own life is unprecedented.

For more information on the worldwide web:

www.flightfromdeath.com: watch the trailer, get production updates, find out where it's playing next!

www.wordsasweapons.com: Greg's site, where you can find out more about the Western Shoshone work he does, the World Leaders Project, and much more.

Or write to Greg Bennick c/o Inside Front.



HUMOR:

Burn Me in a Fire, You Are My True Desire

Greg Bennick

A few years ago, I was up in beautiful Vancouver, B.C., Canada to attend a punk rock show. I try to head up to Canada as often as possible because I think it to be the greatest country on the planet, based on the friendliness of the people, the wide variety of vegan eats available, and the lack of firearms. Of course, my superlative about the country is declared with no offense intended to Poland, which of course has Warsaw—also one of my favorite cities—where my old band Trial was once fed a meal fit for kings by the local punk/hardcore kids. Or should I be saying a meal fit for punk/hardcore kids, served to us by kings? Why should the kings get all the good entrées? But already, I digress. I was in Vancouver (which I might have already mentioned is one of my favorite cities) and while hanging out with my friend Ivan outside the punk show, we overheard some young punk kids talking to one another and poking fun at each other. We didn't pay it any attention until one kid called his friend "gay." Now, Ivan and I assumed that the kid's first name wasn't in fact Gay, and we assumed also that the kid was using the term as a pejorative. We decided to approach him and confront him on what

he'd said. I have to say we would have felt pretty dumb starting to yell at the kid only to have his friend pull out a driver's license and prove to us that his name was in fact "Gay" Smith. You have no idea how many times people have called out to me during my shows, "Hey juggler... you suck," only to be embarrassed later when they learn that my legal name actually *is* Hey Juggler You Suck. I had it changed just to avoid confusion. Anyway, thankfully for Ivan and me, it didn't go down like that. Ivan and I approached the young punk, and engaged him in conversation. Ivan took the lead and offered a brilliant example of how to deal with the situation. He identified what we'd heard, and asked the kid why he'd said it. Of course, the kid just shrugged his shoulders, laughed a sort of "Don't be a dork, old man" sort of laugh, and said, "I dunno... whatever." Ivan asked him why he'd used that particular word, and the kid again had little or no answer. Ivan then asked the kid, "What purpose does language serve?" At this point, the kid realized he wasn't getting out of the situation easily, and actually started to pay attention. He looked up at Ivan. Ivan asked, "Wouldn't you agree that the purpose of language is to convey meaning?" The kid agreed. Ivan said, "Well, if the purpose of language is to convey meaning, what meaning are you conveying through the use of the word 'gay'?" The kid had no answer, for to answer honestly and say that he was trying to

convey that his friend was a homosexual—and that the comment was intended to be an insult—would have made him look like a moron. Ivan and I suggested to the kid that using words uselessly, especially when they have the potential to insult or hurt others, is a waste of time and breath, and is evidence of ignorance. We offered that he could have insulted his friend far more creatively and intelligently, and then we left him to think for himself as to what those venomous barbs might be. Overall, it was a great experience that reaffirmed to me the importance of language. Language defines us as individuals and also defines our cultural constructions. It creates and conveys meaning at the same time. As we communicate and use language, we are developing a narrative that gives meaning, literally, to our lives. In this process, there is little need for useless talk.

One can extrapolate from this that the same importance rings true in lyrics, prose, and poetry. There are no extra words. There isn't room for them. As a writer, I strive to achieve potency, though it could very easily be argued that I fail miserably. As a reader, I find myself wanting that potency from the lyrics, stories, or poems I encounter. The idea of not wasting communication, or maybe more to the point, of making our communication as creative and as potent as is possible (and *beyond* what we think is possible!) is at the core of the human

experience. We have to connect with each other somehow, someway, *any* way, in this disconnected and superficial society... so why not make that connection as vital and intimately expressive as we can? When our speech and text truly convey the intent that we are trying to express in the words we've selected, then we truly have accomplished something significant.

Literature is full of examples demonstrating high achievement in terms of crafting writing to convey meaning. Take, for example, these words from Goethe, "He only earns his freedom and his life who takes them every day by storm." Or these lines of poetry from John Greenleaf Whittier, "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, 'It might have been.'" It becomes easy to see how language can be used effectively when we have examples of brilliance. What is harder to determine is what happens when things go wrong in the use of language. The example I used before, of the young punk rocker insulting his friend, was a blatant example. Others are more insidious. You might ask confusedly, "But Greg, how can we isolate the problem of misuse of language? How can we prevent ourselves from diving headlong into the traps that ensnare aspiring writers and leave them wallowing in useless unintelligible babble?" I sympathize with your question, and can offer a concrete response. To avoid falling into these traps, we must follow simple rules of development that allow us to create a relationship with the words we craft. Following these rules will result in writing—both for prose and poetry as well as for lyrics—that is potent, interesting, and connected. The rules are as follows, and there are three of them. Rule #1: Always write in a voice that is your own, and stop at nothing to drag the deepest truths from yourself and onto the page, no matter what you are trying to express. Rule #2: Utilize the limits and full expanse of your own creativity and ability to describe images, and pursue each word and line as if your very life depended on it. Finally, but most importantly, is Rule #3. Never, under any circumstances, even under threat of torture or death, rhyme the words "fire" and "desire."

These three rules apply to any type of writing. When we speak from a combination of the heart and mind, and when we do so without restricting ourselves by convention or by outside opinion, we unlock enormous potential to connect with a reader through our texts. The third rule applies mostly to lyrics, and as most people reading this article are at the very least music *fans*, I will assume that you recognize that this rule has relevancy. Rhyming

fire and desire on the part of a lyricist is, without a doubt, the worst possible crime against humanity. It is evidence of a deeply rooted psychosis. Those guilty, and the list includes Jimi Hendrix, The Eurythmics, Bananarama, Zegota, and Sir Mix-Alot among others, should be forced to undergo extensive psychological tests before their sanity and safety to the general public are declared. I will leave it up to you to explore and apply the first two rules, and will choose to spend my time here exploring Rule #3, the "Fire/Desire Rule" (as it is called in most collegiate texts), giving examples of what can go wrong if you defy this rule, and ultimately offering examples of other routes you can take in your writing.

One of the most common things that can happen when you join the ranks of the linguistically insane and ignore the Fire/Desire Rule, is that your grammar will deteriorate dramatically and quickly, leaving you essentially unable to communicate. There is no medical cure for this, and your readers will be left stranded in a literary wasteland without nourishment or shelter from your ongoing assault on their minds. Take for example Bruce Springsteen. Bruce, to his credit, started off as a writer struggling against profound disadvantages. Aside from being from Asbury Park, NJ (Try to name one other quality writer or lyricist from Asbury Park. Go ahead. Name one. What was that? Oh... Jon Bon Jovi got his start in Asbury Park? Really? Let's see here. You are trying to justify quality writing by using Jon Bon Jovi as an example? A man who wrote the lines: "I'm a cowboy / on a steel horse I ride / I'm wanted dead or alive"? I rest my case)... as I was saying, aside from being from Asbury Park, Bruce Springsteen suffers from denim poisoning caused by wearing only one pair of jeans every single day since the release of the "Born in the USA" album in 1984. Regardless of the hardships Bruce has faced however, the fact cannot be denied that his grammar suffered tremendously as soon as he engaged the vicious mate of fire and desire. As evidence, I offer his song "I'm On Fire" in which he writes "I'm on fire / I got a bad desire / I'm on fire." Got? Bruce 'got' a bad desire? Funny he should mention it, because I got one too. I got a desire to not buy any of his inane, fire and desire exploiting records at any price. Bruce's grammar difficulties get worse in his song "Fire." The denim seeping deeper into his brain, he stops using nouns and verbs completely in the second part of his lyrical phrasing. He writes, "You say you don't love me, girl you can't hide your desire / 'Cause when we kiss, Fire." Aside from the fact that I ask why Bruce is kissing someone who says she's not interested in him, I wonder what happened to all the verbs? And why

the sudden capitalization? "When we kiss, Fire."? I have a better suggestion. How about, "When I listen to Springsteen, Kill me."

Another shocking example of the effects of using fire and desire is that the use of these words together will cause you to call your loved ones by nonsensical names. Your relationships will deteriorate faster than the fame of an "American Idol" finalist. The members of the rock band Kiss made a fortune by painting their faces to look like psychotic clowns and then playing songs filled with sexual innuendo. Talk about a genius marketing gimmick! Why didn't I think of it? Evil looking sexual space clowns. It has millions of dollars written all over it. A sure bet indeed. Regardless of their marketing brilliance (the effect of which was expressed quite clearly last year by bassist Gene Simmons who said in an interview "Kiss is not a rock and roll band. We are a rock and roll BRAND") the band lost their minds completely in the song "Heaven's On Fire." In the song, Paul Stanley (vocals/guitar) used a pet name for his lover that made the ultimate lovers Romeo and Juliet spin like dynamos in their literary graves. He wrote: "Paint the sky with desire, angel fly / Heaven's on fire." I have to say that I love my girlfriend with every cell in my body. I have covered ground with her that lovers worldwide wish they could experience. I cherish her and she cherishes me. We are beautifully whole together. At the same time, the thought of calling her "Angel Fly" has never once crossed my mind. I have thought to call her a hundred different pet names, many more ridiculous than the next. I actually *have* called her many of these things. But "Angel Fly"? What the hell is an angel fly? Why is it a term of endearment? And would you really want a space clown with a boner calling you "Angel Fly" as he chased you around painting the sky?

Now, you might be wondering, "Are these misuses of language dangerous? Might they lead to actual physical harm?" In fact, I am sad to report, the answer is yes. I suggest that these misuses can actually be life threatening. Breaking the Fire/Desire Rule can result in you starting to carry extremely dangerous items as you walk around publicly. As proof I offer U2's song "Desire." When Bono is not running around the globe making peace and solving the world's problems, he is actually endangering the lives of others. In the song, he sings: "Gonna go where the bright lights / And the big city meet / With a red guitar... on fire / Desire." Need I say more? I wouldn't even carry a burning match to where the bright lights and big city meet... and this idiot is carrying a flaming guitar? Someone could easily be burned or killed! Bono is a

madman and he must be stopped before he strikes again. I suggest a pre-emptive strike. I will arrange an international coalition, or the fragments of one. Bono must be disarmed and removed from power at any cost.

For some, use of fire and desire causes disorientation and lack of focus. Having, and being able to act, with freewill is a large component of being human. Without the ability to decide and act on a course of action, we lose the fullness of our ability to imagine and to create. For the group The Backstreet Boys, it is far too late in this regard, due to advanced fire/desire addiction. Life for them has become very sad indeed. The Backstreet Boys did the unthinkable: they used fire and desire in the same song, not once, but *twice*. May God have mercy on their souls. The result of this lyrical atrocity was the collective loss of the few cells of intellect they had to begin with. In the song, and resulting entirely from their overuse of the fire and desire combination, they make declarations and then contradict them immediately. They leave the reader and listener feeling dizzy and ill. I offer you their smash hit, "That Way": "*You are my fire / The one desire / Believe it when I say / I want it that way / Am I your fire / Your one desire?*" At first glance, all appears normal. But look deeper, my friends, look deeper. Here is where things get perplexing. After blatantly stating that "you" are in fact the "one" desire, they then offer themselves to be not only a second desire, but a fire as well! This is extremely intense, and very confusing. If "you" are not in fact the "one" desire, then does it stand to reason that there are in fact multiple desires as yet undiscovered? And if there are in fact multiples, might we then consider for a moment just where we are going to find fires to match up with these desires? The mind reels at the thought. Thankfully, now that The Backstreet Boys have no career (largely, I would suggest, the result of their lyrical indiscretion), they will have time to help us look.

Please be advised that coupling fire and desire will also affect your use of metaphor. Metaphor is, of course, one of the most potent tools in a writer's box of potent writing tools. Metaphor is a window that can be opened on the world. Now, wasn't that just clever? In describing and defining a metaphor, I actually *used* a metaphor! Delightful. Keep in mind, while you sit there, blissfully enchanted with my wordsmanship, that metaphors can have a dark and seedy underbelly as well, whatever that means. When used incorrectly, metaphor becomes the season of the finger of death. Metaphor can be a drowning sand clam. It can appear as a playful rodent,

and then instantly turn, developing wings while being reborn as an alien toenail. I think you get my point. This problem can be avoided however. You can actually cheat fate. Simply avoid the union of fire and desire, and your metaphors will remain well defined and intact. Look what happened to the 80's band The Cars. They slipped up only once, but the effect was immediate. To tell the truth, they didn't even get out of the verse before an attack of horrible metaphor cut them down. In the song "Let's Go," the band sings: "*She's a frozen fire / She's my one desire.*" A frozen fire? Is that anything like the U.S. military's term "friendly fire" where people shoot their own comrades? Given the course of The Cars later years in music, I might have suggested this to be a better alternative for the band.

Finally, and I am sharing this last point of warning with you because I care deeply about your personal well being, allowing fire and desire to become lyrically one, can help you give life to inanimate objects. It is true. While this may sound exciting—after all, who hasn't thought about what it would be like if scissors could talk—it does open up an entire world of problems. The band Silverchair found that using fire and desire together allowed their body parts to begin to think for themselves. This has profound and potentially horrific implications. In "Anna's Song," they sing: "*Open fire on my knees desires / What I need from you.*" Now, I am all for the exploration of desire and for encouraging others to explore their own desires. However, I would have a very hard time being convinced that my knees have desires, and an even harder time being convinced as Silverchair suggests, that those same knees then deserve to be fired upon for expressing their desires. If my knees actually do have desires, or if they acquire the ability to have them, then I believe wholeheartedly that they should be able to express them as they see fit, without the threat of violence. Anything less would be entirely oppressive. Kneecist, if you will.

I seem to have painted a dismal picture. Amid these shocking uses of fire and desire and their profound effects, we might ask in terms of language and its use: what other routes can we take? How can we avoid the monumental problems mentioned in this article? How can we avoid having to carry flaming guitars through areas of town with which we have limited familiarity? What are we to do to stop kneecism before it starts? How might we settle on the pet name "Sweet Potato" or "Honey Bun" rather than "Angel Fly" for those we love? My suggestion is simple: follow the three rules, and pour your heart into all of your writing. Create every song lyric and every line of text as if it was an epitaph, applying

the same importance to those words as you would apply to the last statement you make to the world. Now, given that I have to be on a plane in six hours to travel to Michigan, I hope that I have not created a self-fulfilling prophecy here. In case you didn't know, I hate flying. It doesn't make sense to me. There is no doubt in my mind that those who invented modern day flying listened to The Backstreet Boys. How else could they possibly have justified spending money on research to develop flying tubes of metal filled with hundreds of people? Only a fire/desire fan could have conceived of such madness.

Given our sound bite world, in which everyone seems to have an attention span of four seconds or less, we can either work to oppose that trend—actually creating vital communication by taking the time to conceive of and then actualize potency¹, no matter what the cost—or, we can play to the lowest common denominator and not challenge ourselves, or our listener/readers, at all. The end result of the second option doesn't strike me as a communicative realm that I want to be a part of. I want a world in which we express ourselves effectively and efficiently, a world in which I can be assured that the ideas being expressed in the words I read and hear are as much an artistic creation as the music, painting, sculpture or other forms of art that might accompany them. Anything less just wouldn't set my heart on fire, or fulfill my burning... well... forget it.

Thanks for reading. I really appreciate it, and would love to hear from you too. Write me anytime: xjugglerx@yahoo.com.

MEMOIR: *Incendiary* *The tale of Fucked Up* Chris Somerville

The bars on my window were thin shafts of black iron. They were mounted to the outside so we couldn't touch them. You see, anything we could touch we could use to hurt ourselves and naturally the entire room was designed with this in mind. There were no real corners anywhere. From the headboard of the bed to the bottom of the table legs, smooth, rounded edges.

During dinner, someone had told me there were cameras in our rooms. Even though they checked our pockets after every meal for cutlery stolen from the dining hall, even though we were denied access to electric razors and dental floss, even though we were at arm's reach from a crew of attendants stationed day and night to open our doors

¹ Editor's note—when reading this column, imagine Greg teaching it to you as a writing seminar: "Actualize Potency."

and check on us repeatedly, still they hid fucking cameras in our bedrooms. I scanned the room viciously and upon finding nothing, I thought about what it would mean if the cameras were really there.

I wondered if someone was watching me at that very moment and as I sat there on the windowsill, hugging my legs, resting my eyes against my bent knees because it was the only comforting thing I could do, I wondered what a stranger would think, I wondered what a stranger would feel when she looked at me. I turned away from this thought, faced my window, saw only thin shafts of black iron.

A knock on my door. "Chris! Hey Chris!" I knew that raspy half-whisper, it was Marie. "Come on out man, we're gonna jam!" I opened the door and saw Ben and Marie smirking at me with mischievous glints in their eyes.

"What do you mean *jam*?" I asked, instantly infected by their mischief, "Jam with what?"

"With my guitar," Marie gleefully retorted.

"Your *WHAT*?" I had been away from my guitar for six days now and could already feel my fingers begin to atrophy. Naturally my mind was stagnating as well.

Playing music, even with the sub-basic understanding I had then, was a way for me to flush my volatile, caustic emotions through a medium. Destruction, even self-destruction, is a form of creation.

Nothing was for keeps in those days. I didn't "write songs," I just played. My guitar was my journal, my confidant, my cardboard box to bash with a baseball bat. It was my door to slam, my emotional release and without it I could not possibly be expected to behave in a rational, socially acceptable manner. Although I suppose that was decidedly a non-issue in this place.

"Come *ON*!" Marie tugged me by the sleeve down the hallway to the attendant's desk. She blew past the desk clerk, reached behind the counter and withdrew a black nylon gig bag that was obviously filled with guitar.

My jaw dropped. I stood motionless, transfixed on the object, eyes bulging. "I... I don't understand... how is this possible?"

"My mom brought it here for me. Now *LET'S GO*!" We ran back down the hallway, tromped halfway up the stairs to the

fulcrum point where the flight changed directions. There was one of those wide pentagonal steps, big enough for the three of us. We sat in a circle facing one another, beaming.

"Okay, are you ready?"

I couldn't speak. Slowly, Marie unzipped the gig bag, threw it open and there, in the middle of our circle, lay a yellow imitation fender telecaster. It was almost as ugly as my guitar at home and the mere sight of it filled me with fresh light. I was exalted.

"Alright you guys," began Marie, suddenly very serious, "Tonight, we are a band."

"A band..." I whispered in disbelief.

"What should we call ourselves?" Ben mused.

Marie picked up the guitar. There was a pick wedged behind the nut and she pulled it free with a *plink*! She looked up at us from underneath thick, dark eyebrows and played the most dissonant tinny awful chord ever to bounce off those white walls.

BRANG!

"Live from Four Winds mental hospital, we are... *FUCKED UP!!*" *DA-NA-NA-NA-NA!*

"Yes!"

"Fucked Up! We're Fucked Up!" I shook myself spastically, startled by my own excitement. And just then something, perhaps the sound of a door closing, snapped me back. I looked down the stairs and remembered where I was.

"But, Marie," I murmured, pointing in the direction my concern was now drifting, "Aren't they afraid you'll..."

"...hang myself with a GIT-ar string?"

"Yeah!" said Ben, "It'll be just like that Beck song!" But I could feel the night attendant's ears prick up. They didn't understand, I was serious.

"Don't worry about it, man," Marie assured me in earnest, "As long as I don't take it into my room we'll be fine."

"Okay," I said, gradually returning, "So if we're a band, we need to have songs." They both looked at me, grinning widely.

"Let me see that guitar," Marie handed me the instrument, which I immediately tuned to drop-D. *JUN-JUN-JUN-JUN!* I chugged swiftly up the neck and sighed deeply with relief. *At last...*

"So, what do we write songs about?" I inquired. Ben and Marie looked at each

other and shrugged. "Oh COME ON! We're on Suicide Watch, there has to be *something* we're pissed off about!"

"Hhhmmmm... what about the meds line!" A brilliant suggestion from Ben, we all agreed. You see, every day, twice a day, we had to wait single file, on a line that led to a split door that led to a dominating, stupid, insensitive fucking nurse who would give us medication, make us stand before her so she could watch us take it, then check under our tongues to make sure we had swallowed it.

Ben *hated* taking meds. He just hated what they did to him. Hated himself when he was on them. So he was really good at hiding his meds and everyone knew it. The nurse would thoroughly inspect his mouth with a flashlight, *and* make him empty his pockets, thereby forcing him to swallow those fucking pills every day, twice a day. "Fucking bitch..." he murmured to himself.

"Right!" I said, now driven and determined, "the meds line it is!" I burst into my favorite four-chord Riot Grrrl riff and Marie let out a mocking call met by Ben's bitter response: *DA-NA-NA! NA-DA-NA! NA-DA-NA! NA-NA-NA-NA!*

"Time to take yr medication now."

"FUCK YOU! YEAH! YEAH!"

"Wannanother cuppa water?"

"FUCK YOU! YEAH! YEAH!"

"Now let's check under yr tongue."

"FUCK YOU! YEAH! YEAH!"

"C'mon now, swallow it!"

"FUCK YOU! YEAH! YEAH!"

We collapsed all over each other, quaking with uproarious laughter. Ben almost fell down the stairs. We collected ourselves, reformed our circle and stared rabidly into one another's eyes. There was a ferocity inside all three of us, a wildness that could be given no voice within those walls. Medicated, silenced, walking single file, they tried starving it out of us. Strapped down, sedated, a breakdown alone in the Quiet Room, they tried beating it out of us. And when the scowls from our eyes, the bile from our mouths showed them that it just wouldn't die, they gave us "outlets," "drama therapy." They told us to scream our guts out at the folding chairs, pretending they were our parents. And we scoffed at this hollow gesture, laughed out loud in their faces at how ludicrous it was. Cursed ourselves later for not doing as they asked, for not drawing on our rage, our most deeply seated *fucking hatred*, letting it pour out of us and into the place it truly belonged: *INTO THEM.*

For yes, we hated our parents, and yes, we hated ourselves, but we hated them more. And we saw their mission to make us "safe"



for what it was: to strip us of autonomy, to cut us down to size, to protect us from ourselves. But that night as we sat in our circle on the stair, as we looked into each other's eyes, brimming with ferocity, the wildness they sought to starve, to beat, defile, desecrate, we could feel it pulse from every pore.

Reveling in our rebellion, tiny though it was, the threat of consequences had no power in our hearts. A separation contract (we would speak only in secret), banished to the Quiet Room (we would not speak at all). The tools of their control, in that moment, *decimated*. For the flame they had thought sensible to snuff was once again ignited, all because we stole away for just one moment, ran away just one click beyond surveillance, just one inch beyond arm's reach, to draw in one breath that was *ours*, sing one note they couldn't silence, draw a circle 'round ourselves for just one moment in Our World.

And for this we risked everything—punishment, imprisonment, the ever-looming threat of an ever-longer stay within their walls and in their lines, waiting to be pacified. Another flashlight in my mouth, another pocket inside out, another confiscated butter knife, another night alone. We risked everything for *THIS*: To feel alive.

To feel alive.

HISTORY: A Brief Introduction to the Cynics, Greek Punk Rockers circa 400 B.C.

on loan from *Crimepensée*TM

We're not in this alone and never were. The status quo and the circulation of power and domination both rely on our isolation, whether it is spatial, communicational, or historical—but we are everywhere, all of the time, out of the time.

The cynics of yore were the converse of today's cynics; rather than simply accepting their role as complicit complainers, they broke every rule and dictum in the then-nascent social contract. It was thus that they earned their name, for "cynic" comes from the ancient Greek for "dog"—their critics said of them that they were shameless as dogs, and they agreed, cackling.

As of today, the cynics are the oldest badasses we know. Our forefather Anthistenes was born 25 centuries ago; he spit in the faces of Alexander the "Great" and Plato. Diogenes, his pupil, followed in

the 4th century BC. He lived in a wine cask, scavenged all his food, and wrote approvingly of cannibalism and incest. Exiled from his birthplace, presumably for defacing the local currency, he took "deface the coinage!" as his motto, implying that the standards of his day were corrupt and should be marked as such by being broken. He was followed by Crates, who renounced all his wealth to become a couch-surfing cynic, and Hipparchia, a proto-feminist who refused the role of the Greek woman working the loom to focus on educating herself instead.

It's said that once, on a sunny day, Diogenes showed up with a lit torch in one hand, claiming he needed it in his search for honest human beings, and a pilgrim's staff in the other, with which he said he would beat the debris who answered his queries. We carry on Diogenes's torch and staff, but this time with a different plan in mind...

The Cynics' Nine Point Program to Destroy Civilization

1. Contrary to peripat(h)etic philosophers, the cynics consider animals as their model, perfect in their freedom. They recognize themselves in the wandering dog, ferocious yet dignified. They only bite their friends—they are the only ones who deserve it. They defecate, eat, sleep, and masturbate in palace and garbage dump alike, or wherever else they feel the need to. They bite, piss, and shit over the subhumans who hide behind the masks of power—that is to say, impotence: for every chain of command works both ways.

2. Facing falsified life, the cynics falsify all contractual and conventional values. They find security in danger, wealth in absolute poverty, happiness in independence and autonomy, and wisdom in the derision of habit.

3. The cynics reject hope as an escape. Hope is the virtue of the slave. The cynics merge the means and the end: no anti-chamber of freedom is acceptable. No end can justify the sacrifice of the moment. Their lifestyle is liberation and liberating. They yield to the instant without compromising the totality.

4. The cynics are cosmopolitan: they belong to no city, to no home. Beggars, vagabonds, living from day to day, they belong to nature; they submit to it, only the better to master it.

5. The cynics have nothing to do with the obedient camel or the lion's negating roar.

*For those who found this Crimepensée report deliciously incomprehensible, we offer this appendix, one of our favourite selections of unintelligible intellectual blathering. Those who find this easy to understand may wish to consider careers in the competitive world of anarcho-academicism—and those who find that palatable should try their hand at understanding Guy Debord's infamous work, *Society of the Spectacle*! Make sure to read this aloud in a funny accent, standing before a chalkboard if possible, gesturing dramatically...*

GIBBERISHISTORY: The Situationists Come As Fuck!

I receive the luxurious album of Laurent Chollet: *The Insurrection Situationist*. Again history of young people who, after this war, assimilated the surrealist revolt and who want to make incandescent all the cantons of the life, individual and daily, political, social—i.e., and that starts always thus since Dada, by saying shit to the literature, painting, and the usual forms of the language. Lettrisme will have its heroes, picturesque like Isidore Isou, pretentious like Maurice Bismuth (says Lemaître), sympathetically unforeseeable like Gabriel Pommerand. They do not live all as tramps, but put into practice all this slogan: "Never work!"... graffiti on the walls of the Sorbonne with this other, quite as difficult to assert: "Enjoy without obstacle!"

Guy Debord becomes the thinking head, the federator of what is neither a federation nor international, of what will take the name of "International Situationist," and, in the final analysis, it will only be found, after the autodissolution in 1971. "The Situ" made speak about them, and not only in May 1968. They counted painters now known, poets and agitators of high flight, writers like Debord itself, Raoul Vaneigem, they "essaime" in Italy, in Germany, in Holland, in England, and as far as Australia.

After the autodissolution, they are the drifts: brigandage in Baader, brigades red, terrorism, the delinquency, drug, after the "Proletarians of the all the countries, cherish you!" the profitable pornography industry. The company of the spectacle of Debord in book of pocket, just like the handbook of good manners of Vaneigem, remain excellent breviaries for a youth from now on revolted to good measure—but is, even revolted?

Like children, they dance and juggle with existing conditions—perpetually inventing new possibilities for life, making short work of habits and conventions, calling new styles and new forms of expression into existence.

² Editor's note: It's all Greek to me!

6. The cynics shit on subcultural mechanical intellectualization and afferent sophism to leave room for acts and life. "It is of no use to know by heart the pentatonic scale if one's soul isn't tuned."

7. The cynics spit in the face of seriousness and pharisaism. A cynic, once taken prisoner by slave sellers, answered thus a buyer who asked his abilities: "Managing men! Is anyone looking for a master?" This somersault won him his freedom. The cynics' subversive methodology is irony, sarcasm, provocation, even insult. They play with the language to undermine and subvert. Their Maieutics is mediated by abortion².

8. The cynics push scandals to their paroxysm. They spit their freedom in the faces of others, to purify souls. They advocate zoophilia, incest, cannibalism, open and public sexual relations, and the refusal of any kind of burial, in order to demonstrate that taboos are social constructs.

9. The cynics reject all forms of power and domination (except over themselves). They see solipsism as the only truth and find excellence in virtue. They spit upon gods and masters. They do not advocate any sub- or anti-culture, but instead a counterculture.

Spit down your throat by the Crimépense™ special force for "elitizing the masses." For more information about the cynics, agoraphilian sex, the bibliography of this piece, or whatever, write to info@crimépensee.org, or try www.crimépensee.org

HOW TO:

Sybarites of the World... Unite! Or, How to Give a Badass

Massage

by Adam B., Licensed Massage Practitioner

Feeling worn out after a long, hard day of sticking it to "The Man"?

Does your body ache upon coming home from the shit job you force yourself to wake up for?

Tired and sore after a night of walking; searching for something this world we've carved out for ourselves has to offer, searching for just one dignified face?

Massage exchanged amongst friends can be a great way to counter such maladies, among others. Here's how (really condensed and incomplete as fuck)...

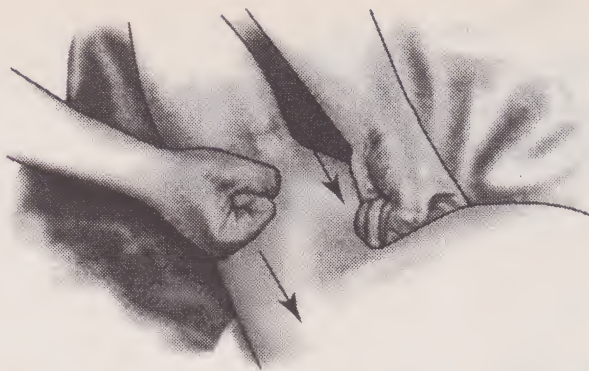


FIGURE 8-6. Deep effleurage to hamstrings using fists.

Obviously, you can massage somebody anywhere, but if you want to get fancy, find something for them to lie on that is about the height of your knuckles if you make a fist and hold your arm to your side. Have the person you're massaging get as naked as they're comfortable with, cover them with a sheet, expose the body part you're going to work on, and start rubbing!

For lubricant vegetable or almond oil works fine. If you're interested in scented oils, fuck the stuff you can get at over-priced horrible stores—make them yourself! *The Art of Aromatherapy* by Robert B. Tisserand seems like a good resource to me. When applying oil, use the minimum amount necessary to allow your hands to flow over the body without pinching.

Here are descriptions of the three main Swedish massage strokes, and a bit about how to execute them:

**Effleurage* is the first and last stroke used on a body part in Swedish massage, as well as being used to transition between other techniques. It is a long, gliding stroke. The first couple passes serve to spread oil as well as introduce your touch. Pour a little bit of oil into your hands, rub them together to warm it, and gently spread the oil on the skin, keeping your hands loose and melded to the contours of the body part. After a few light strokes gradually increase the pressure. Physiologically, this moves blood, lymph, and interstitial fluid (the fluid in spaces between cells), thus improving local circulation. To execute effleurage you can use open palms, knuckles, forearms, elbows, fingertips, or thumbs depending on the

desired pressure and result.

So say you're massaging the back of the leg—what you want to do is, starting at the foot, keep your arms *straight* from your shoulder to your wrists and use your legs to push your hands up the leg. Keep your legs in a lunging position and lean forward with your body to apply pressure (try to keep your back pretty straight as you do this). The pressure and strength of the stroke should be coming from your legs and use of body weight—NOT your arms!

Always apply pressure towards the heart and gently glide back down the body part.



FIGURE 8-1. Circular friction along erector muscles using fingertips.

Pressure going away from the heart puts undue strain on the one-way valves in your veins which help move deoxygenated blood back to the heart.

A rad variation of effleurage is called a C-drain. Put your thumbs and fingers in a position so they form a "C." Then alternately stroke up the body with each hand, always leaving one hand in contact while the other is lifted. This is an excellent technique to use on someone with poor circulation, as it moves fluid like a motherfucker.

I usually close a body part with nerve strokes. This is simply lightly brushing your fingertips over the skin.

**Petrissage*, or kneading, is the second stroke of a Swedish massage. Petrissage lifts tissue from underlying structures. The motions of it serve to "milk" the tissue of accumulated

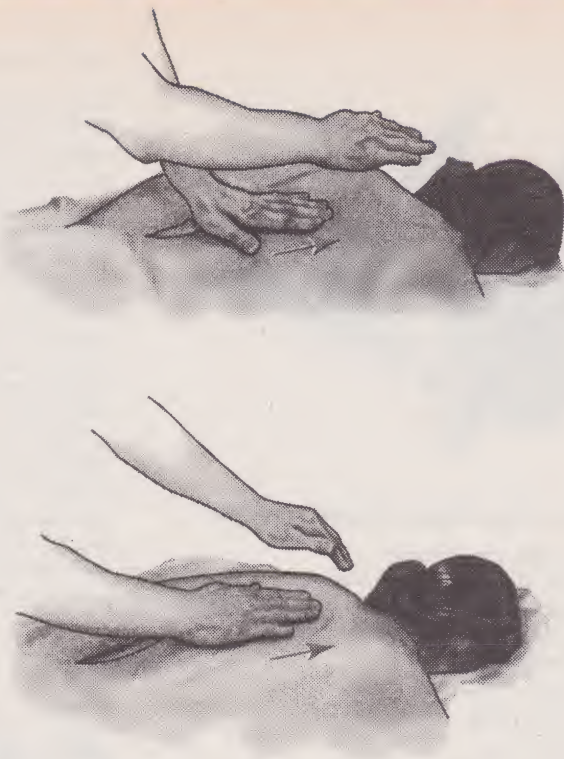


FIGURE 6-4. Shingles effleurage with hands parallel to the spine and to the direction of movement.

waste products, increase local circulation, and assist venous return (oxygen-depleted blood going back to the heart).

Probably the easiest variation is two-handed kneading. It's performed by lifting, squeezing, and then releasing tissue. Your entire hand should be in contact with the tissue. The movement is lifting muscle tissue away from the underlying bone.

The variation I use most often is called bilateral petrissage. Say you're working on the back—stand facing the receiver from the side with your feet spread far enough apart to allow you to comfortably move your hips from side to side. Start on the far side of the back by the hips. Grasp tissue with one hand, and, using your thumb as a nearly immobile base, bring your fingers up towards the thumb while still grasping the tissue (be careful not to pinch). As you complete this motion, slide your other hand onto the same area and repeat (remember—lift the tissue!). Continue this all the way up the side of the back. When you get up towards the shoulders move your body so you are facing the top of the receiver's head and do some work on the trapezius muscle (the muscle that is at the top of the back) and the neck. When you've finished with the trapezius and neck keep up the petrissage while moving so you are facing the other side of the receiver's body and continue down the other side of the back. On legs and arms work from thigh to ankle

and shoulder to wrist. As you apply the stroke sway your hips in the same direction that pressure is being applied.

Petrissage, and especially the bilateral variation, is probably the hardest massage stroke to master as well as being hard as fuck to describe with words only. When I'm doing it I just think "lift... lift... lift" in my head, as well as making sure my hips are moving along with the motions of my hands. The most important thing is to grasp and lift as much tissue as you can and working to maintain an even, soothing rhythm.

**Friction* is applied after you've sufficiently warmed up tissue with effleurage and petrissage. Make sure there is not too much lubricant remaining on the skin when you are ready to apply friction. The intention is for the receiver's skin to move over tissues underneath, rather than just sliding your thumbs, fingers, etc. over the skin. When applying friction always check in with

the person you are massaging. They should not at any point be in pain. Just as with effleurage, when performing friction to legs and arms always apply pressure towards the heart.

Friction is also similar to effleurage in that you can use open palms, knuckles, forearms, elbows, fingertips, and thumbs to execute it. The difference between the two strokes lies mainly in the amount of pressure applied and the speed of them. Basically, you can never go too slow with friction. Even keeping friction stationary works great in some areas. For example, if the receiver is lying on their back and you are working on the back of their neck, you can just curl your fingertips and let gravity apply the pressure. Whatever part of your body you use to apply friction, remember to be mindful of how you are moving. Make sure all the joints from your shoulder to fingertips are as straight as possible and that pressure is coming from your body weight combined with the movement of your legs and torso—not your arms or hands!

One of the most useful aspects of friction is its ability to break up adhesions. With lack of movement, or stress or trauma to an area, muscles fibers can stick together or tendons can stick to tissues they come in contact with. Deep friction can help separate such tissues and keep bodies moving smoothly.

Really, massage is the sort of thing you have to practice a lot to become good at, rather than reading a bunch of books, but hopefully this gives you some good ideas and information. Remember that the intention you give to your touch and the state of mind you are in is much more important than how many fancy techniques

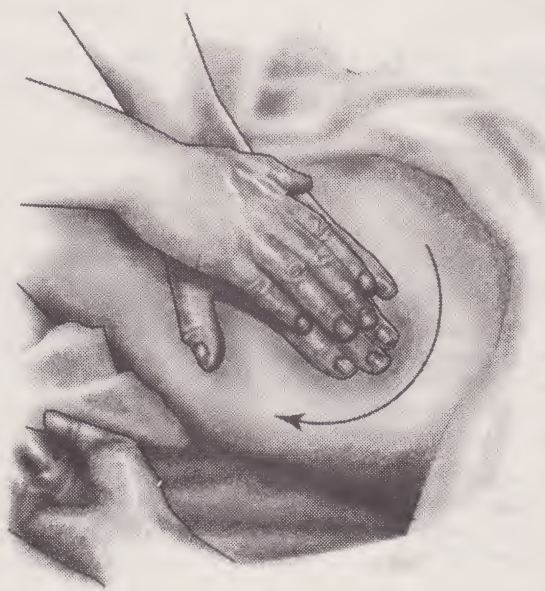


FIGURE 8-5. Deep effleurage to the gluteals using reinforced fingertips.

you know. Just stay relaxed and in tune with what your receiver is feeling, remember to breathe (both massager and massagee!), maintain contact and a steady soothing rhythm and you'll do fine.

—An excellent book on massage/bodywork is *Job's Body* by Deane Juhan. It explores how the body's physiology is affected by bodywork. Even better, it describes in fascinating scientific detail why it makes no sense to discuss the "mind" and "body" as separate, distinct entities.

—If you have any questions about anything I've written, or desire more specific information, feel free to write to me. Really, all you people should just write to me anyway, for anything, and I do mean anything, at all. If you happen to live somewhere near Tacoma and want me to show you some massage stuff in person, or just hang out or something, I'd be happy to.

—I'm working on a vastly expanded version of this article, and hopefully will be able to put together a whole zine about these matters. I'm going to try to get it done by the summer, but we'll see. If you'd be interested in having such a zine, get in touch.

Adam, P.O. Box 208, Kapowsin, WA 98344,
USA (dot_4strings@hotmail.com)

Re-Code Your Own Price!

RE-CODE.COM is a free web service that allows its customers to share product information and create barcodes that can be printed and used to re-code items in stores by placing new labels over existing UPC symbols to set a new price—participating in an act of tactical shopping. RE-CODE.COM at its core is a shared database, updateable by our customers. Participation is free and requires no special membership agreements or software download. After entering the website, customers can choose to search and view information in our database currently or add their own collected data to the system. Using our custom Barcode Generator application, barcodes are drawn in real time and made available to the user.

If you like to save money, you've come to the right place! Our unique process of shared database building based on preshopping, recoding, and postshopping, enables you to pay only what you are willing to for the name brand products you want. In the process, we save our customers millions and millions of dollars! Here's the inside scoop on how our revolutionary "Re-Code Your Own Price" service works.

Our customers and community members travel to their local chain stores to collect information about the products the stores carry, when possible noting major brands and their generic equivalents. Using our convenient downloadable Data Collection Sheets, RE-CODE.COM customers are able to easily note UPC ID number, name, product packaging, and price. This information can then be easily added to the RE-CODE.COM supercomputer to help build a shared database. The process of adding original item UPC's and prices to RE-CODE.COM is known as postshopping. Postshopping is critical in building a large database of products for each area of the country. A database which is both ours and yours!

It's a simple concept, but recoding a product's original UPC barcode with another item sold at the same store's code, and with a much more acceptable price, enables tremendous savings for you the customer. By planning your store purchases in advance, and logging on to our website, you can engage in the process of preshopping. Preshopping's value is determined by you the customer, as you search our database for the prices you want to pay at the stores you plan to shop at. Be sure to take note of packaging materials for each product to make the recoding process simpler. Either generate product barcodes on the fly using our custom Barcode Generator application, view search results and cut, copy, and paste resulting barcodes into any graphical layout utility, or find a Pre-formatted Barcode Sheet for a store near you. After locating the codes you want

in one of these three ways, simply print your barcodes at home onto label paper available at most office supply or electronics stores and cut out your codes in preparation for re-coding. We encourage our customers to re-code brand name items with generic item codes. Through this process, the customer pays a more reasonable price for what is a quite similar product. It is best to make only slight adjustments such as these to avoid the notice of our competitors—the chain stores and the major brands they carry.

Checking out is simple. Many stores even offer self-scanning checkouts. This is of course the easiest way to scan your re-coded items undetected. In situations where this is not available, cashiers will assist you through their workplace boredom by only listening for a beep as they scan your item rather than noticing the product name which their register might display. Again, if recoding brand name products using their generic equivalents' UPC codes, it is likely that the registers product name displays will not appear all that different. In one test, both Kellogg's Frosted Flakes (\$3.39 US) and Better Valu Sugar Frosted Flakes (\$1.69 US) appear with the word Flakes in their name at the register. This helps the cashier to remain focused on the beep rather than the product name as they scan away your savings. Of course, this requires some flexibility on your part, but this is what allows you to save up to 40% on brand-name products every day.

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BE FREE, AT NO FEE, SMASH TOURISM!

Atrophied letterbomb to the editor disguised as prologue to the Scene Reports¹:

a travelogue supplied by little Marko Polo, age 15. overseas correspondent

Dear friends,

I'm stuck out here in Norway with my parents on this stupid vacation. God, it seems like I could go to the fucking moon with them, and it would still be like being home in New Medford. These people make everything petty and dumb, even fjords and Viking longboats. I know I should feel lucky to be out here—most of my friends back home will never get the chance to see this place, and that's just another level of how fucked up everything is—but this isn't even like *being here*, it's just more being with my family in the fake fucking world they live in.

They share this pathological spectatorship with the rest of their class, as far as I can tell—looking around at all the others here like them. Coming from a milieu where values of *owning* and *appearing* have replaced those of *feeling* and *acting*, these bourgeois vacationers seek diversion in the symbolic possession of parts of the world other than those they normally occupy—a possession they establish by the act of *looking*, "sightseeing." This is the true meaning of the all the photographing and videotaping: the pictures may not be important later on (except for those insufferable

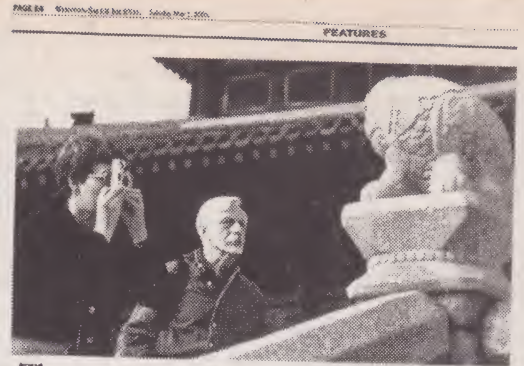
slideshows to which one imagines conquering Roman emperors would have subjected their courts, had they possessed the technology), they may not be taken with any artistic application or intentions, but they serve to establish the tourists as *collectors*—they collect images, just as others collect butterflies. This is the only way the unreconstructed bourgeois family knows to relate itself to foreign things²: the beautiful and the wild are quite scenic, but lack meaning until they are hunted, captured, pinned.

The hastily snapped images are preserved, as if in formaldehyde, and the family congratulates itself on knowing "all about" Norway, and/or Sweden, France, Italian architecture and cooking, the wildlife of the Pacific Ocean, the struggles of the first Polar explorers, the troubled childhood of Van Gogh ("and that," intones the tour guide of the slideshow of photos taken from behind a rope under the direction of another tour guide, how's that for post-modernism, "is the very room he spent his first six years in!"). Even more importantly, the lenses never leave the eyes of the tourists in the course of their vacation, literally or figuratively. This mediation is also integral to the tourist experience.

The modern tourist arrives at his calling from a world of control mania, already an expert at protecting

himself to death. The bourgeois insist on being safe wherever they go—not just from actual danger, but from everything not already anticipated, comprehended, controlled. The travel guides and guidebooks, the painstakingly planned itineraries, the safe bubbles of tourist bus and museum and hotel, the armies of salesmen who cater to every fabricated need—all these combine to ensure that being in Oslo or Zimbabwe actually is the same as being in Oklahoma. And yet beneath everything, tourism is still a desperate bid to experience something *different*, something "exotic," which is to say—something not quite as lifeless, meaningless, tedious and banal and insipid as daily life under the tyranny of the hair dryer and the cellular phone³.

And so the worst tragedy is that tourism destroys the observed as it maintains the alienation of the observers. Just as in the course of their exploits explorers have cut wider and wider swaths through the natural environment (until all that remains of it in some places are fishtanks in museums), the tourist crushes beneath him exactly that which he seeks. The human being in the bourgeois man needs variety, danger, adventure, but the bourgeois in him channels these needs into surrogate enterprises and hedged bets: traveling to France, he still wants to speak English; rafting the



Tourrорist Attacks Increase
U.S. Japan responsible, claims anarchist group—

¹... or is it the other way 'round?

² Witness ecotourism—essentially the idea that a little fragment of an ecosystem deserves to be left alone as long as it is entertaining to the bourgeoisie. They go on vacation to ooh and aah at exotic wildlife when they won't even recycle bottles in their own kitchens. They speak about "special" places that should be made parks and reserves, neglecting the fact that the very ground they live on was once just as wild and beautiful, before it was destroyed by the lifestyles they refuse to question.

³ Indeed, when one listens closely to the ghost stories shared by bourgeois kids on the summer vacation backpack/hostel circuit, about kidnappings and stolen kidneys, it becomes clear that they are practically fantasies, legends of something real and endangering—engaging!—happening to someone just like you, told in desperate faith that something crazy and new is still possible in even this world, and couched in the only terms at the disposal of bourgeois youth confronted with the unfamiliar: terror!

rapids, he still needs a release to sign and an "historic path" to follow (as all meaningful experience is held hostage in the past, or in the exotic lives of other peoples); landing on Mars, he would look around for a sign announcing the next guided tour. Wielding the power of the new angry god, Dollar, he is able to compel everyone he encounters to provide him with this safety net of chains. Wherever the tourist tramples, soon little remains but the manifestation of his own creative and cultural bankruptcy (visit Cancun, Mexico for proof). Whole cultures have been annihilated in his wake—tourism is, as the venerable master points out, the descendant not of ancient quests and pilgrimages but rather of colonial imperialism.

In the absence of the real thing, the tourist is left with simulation. Even the most wild and crazy travel handbooks ("Europe on twenty cents a day!" "Antarctica for hitchhikers!") are just museums of fossilized adventure by the time they go into circulation—as if there could ever be such a thing as a "guide to adventure," when adventure is precisely that which happens off the map. The most the daring tourist can hope to find is the cooling trail left by the *real* adventurers before her, the ones who embarked without maps. The others have to make do with monuments and museums and theme parks, forever asking rhetorical questions ("I wonder what it was/would be like to...?") without connecting their own lives to the possibilities they unconsciously raise. Perhaps they buy more guidebooks, seeking characteristically to purchase the solutions to their needs embodied as products—rather than shaking off the alienation and doing something to find them.

The common quality that unifies all tourists is *disconnection*: they are totally uninvolved in what they see, pursuing as they do the sight alone without all the entanglements and liabilities that come with real life. They can passively vote on their favorite place or painting, or, at most, develop some paternalistic, picturesque Hallmark sentiment that "exotic" environments or cultures should be "protected,"

but it never occurs to them that they *are interacting* with the worlds they would view with the same detachment one watches television—thus they are unable to take responsibility for the role they play in eradicating them, or for that matter, for their own spiritual malaise and restlessness. They could be at home—or even where they are—*giving* themselves to something, becoming involved in some part of life, acknowledging their own wishes for the world and believing in them, holding themselves answerable for the effects of their actions and in so doing making changes in the world deliberately for once; instead, they vacation in the never-never land of disconnection, extending their own alienation to the furthest corners of the globe. This alienation replicates itself there, driving them to ever more expensive ocean cruises and souvenirs in a listless addict's pursuit of stimulation—when all it would take to break the spell would be for them to commit themselves to some value or dream, one that would drag them into danger and heartbreak and ragged glory and all those other things one must experience to live an engaged, fulfilling life. They could do that without ever booking flights or packing suitcases. The fact that they are able to maintain their distance from life ten thousand miles from home as easily as they can in the midst of the inertia of their daily routines is a testament to the total and global triumph of universal self-estrangement. Capitalism, oppression, colonialism, though responsible for creating this state of affairs, are mere superficial problems beside it. Ultimately, tourism is not a leisure activity but a *way of living*, an expression of the vacuum at the heart of consumer society. What the executive does in the Louvre and the Himalayas and Jamaica is what he does in his own neighborhood when he drives past woodlands being cut to make way for new gas stations and condominiums. What it will take to snap him out of this trance—to make him relate himself to the others around him, and the transformations taking place constantly in the world—well, the fate of the planet relies on us discovering that, doesn't it.

To do so, we have to follow the leads in our own lives, locate the parts of ourselves that are not yet totally detached, the loves and longings that still stir within us. The truth is, I do long to travel—my heart still leaps at the thought of dropping everything and setting out free and empty-handed across this unfamiliar landscape, and I don't think this is simply the bourgeois spectator within me. Travel is fundamental to human liberty and romance: it was the original state of our species, and we still long for it. It is in traveling that we can shake off our old selves and hunt down others that have been waiting in alternate worlds—it is in travel that freedom is possible, for without new horizons we would simply repeat the well-practiced choices we have already made, in thrall to inertia if no other master.

So, with all the world standardized under cultural/corporate imperialism and technological/industrial capitalism, when we bear the seeds of these poisons within our own unwilling, colonized breasts, where is there left to go? How are we now to travel? The answer is: *in place*. The adventures of the future will be created, not by Westerners who destroy worlds in their desperate bid to escape the Western one, but by people who seize familiar parts of this planet and make them unfamiliar. Washington, D.C. could become Paris, 1968 overnight, if a group were ready to make the right adjustments; a sense of one's own importance and capabilities can transform even a suburban bedroom into the setting of the greatest of real life epics. Really, this was always the case: one either regards the world passively, or approaches it as a participant—all things hinge on this, whether you are at home or at the bottom of the sea. In traveling in place, we can rediscover that art of *participation* which is essential for any adventuring... and with any luck, my children will never have to write an article like this about me.

Hey, send me some mail, it'd be cool to find it waiting for me when I get back—write to Spoiled Brats c/o CrimethInc. Trust Fund Army

Walk down the streets of Durham or Quebec City today; chances are you'll find it hard to imagine that anything is possible there other than buying and selling, impatience in traffic jams, the petty business of everyday life that consumes all time and energy. Resistance to routine is shut up, shut out, shut in, shut down in order of the danger it presents (sure, you can still pose as a threat, but that doesn't make pose a threat, let alone really pose one). No one in sight is suffering—the homeless and poor have already been hounded out by the police—and for those who remain, it's out of the question; suffering here, for something one really cared about, would be a triumph, unimaginable in these circumstances. That is to say—for the modern law-abiding citizen, hell is overhead.

But this isn't the only reality, the only possibility. Just a few months ago, tens of thousands of us were fighting the police for those same streets, to get a little space and time to prove that—and, for a few hours and blocks at least, we did. It's the nature of status quo that it appears unassailable; but don't be fooled, disturbance is brewing, and will be back again... one day to liberate the place you are reading at this very moment.

Uproar is our only music.

News from the front quebec city

EYEWITNESS ANALYSIS:

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS
[F.T.A.A.] SUMMIT APRIL 19-22 2001



WHAT HAPPENED IN QUEBEC?

In short, a handful of autonomous, cooperating groups took to the streets and fought the pigs until practically the entire city was fighting with us in autonomous, cooperating groups of their own. This is an unprecedented event in the recent history of the anti-capitalist struggle in North America.

In this report, I'm going to concentrate on how and why this was possible. If you want to know specific details about the F.T.A.A., the summit, or the events that transpired before and during it, there are plenty of other sources that can give you that information. Here I'm assuming you have already found access to that information, and also that you already know what you have at stake in resisting global "free trade"... and capitalism itself, for that matter.

THE CONDITIONS THAT MADE THIS POSSIBLE

Quebec, the French-speaking region of an otherwise English-speaking nation, has a long-standing independence movement, and natives harbor some resentment against both their government and the cultural standardization imposed by the nearby United States. This proved to be really decisive in the events of the weekend, though few demonstrators saw in advance how important this would turn out to be.

The Canadian government, fearful of another demonstration like the one that took place in Seattle during the World Trade Organization meeting,

had a concrete wall with a chain-link fence atop it built entirely around the center of Quebec City, and closed off the space within it entirely to everyone not possessed of a resident's card. The wall was built at great expense to Canadian taxpayers, and trained riot police were sent in from other regions of Canada, armed with water cannons, new stun guns¹, tear gas, etc. All this infuriated the locals: not only were a group of foreign leaders invading their city to discuss matters of "free trade" (which, it's an open secret, is sought by the rich so they can become richer at everyone else's expense) in a working class region of Canada, but their own city was being taken away from them for this purpose, and they were being treated like illegal aliens in it.

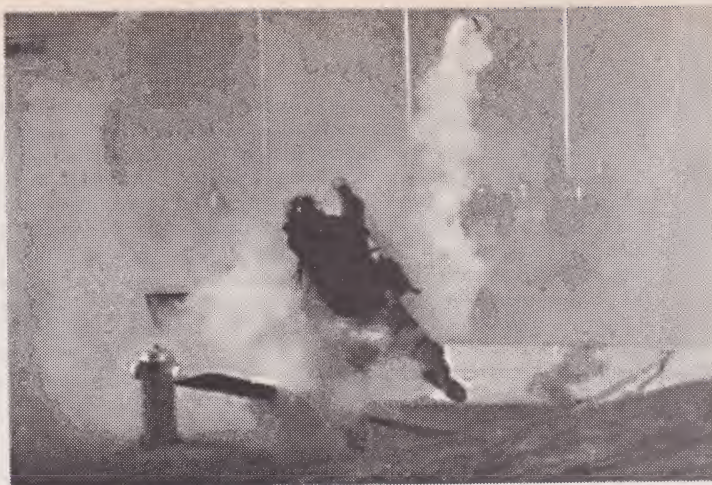
In addition to local outrage, another important ingredient was the presence of a great number of protesters from a wide variety of backgrounds. Because thousands of the protesters in attendance were seen as coming from a center-left position (i.e. being "mainstream," according to the old myth), and the media in attendance had not already stigmatized them as marginalized extremists, the police forces had a stake in being seen as restrained. The protests at the presidential inauguration last January took place in similar conditions. Then, as now, this made it possible for the small minority who were prepared from the outset to use confrontational tactics to do so without being immediately subdued by police violence and arrested—and this time, thanks to local outrage and the fact that no one else was offering an approach that actually contested the source of everyone's frustration, these tactics were soon appropriated by practically everybody there, even locals who hadn't thought of themselves as "protesters" at all.

THE ORGANIZING

To my knowledge, this was the first major demonstration on this continent in which a large part of the organizing was done according to anarchist procedures, including a sympathy for what was referred to as "a diversity of tactics." For a thorough discussion of this subject, consult the CrimethInc. report from the demonstrations in Sao Paulo, 2000, which appeared in the previous issue of Inside Front as *The Violence/Non-Violence Question: How (and Why) to Transcend It*. In Quebec, the "diversity of tactics" included property destruction, provocation

¹ It's interesting to note that while Canadian police have been required until now to test their stun weapons upon themselves, so as to personally know their capabilities and effects, this requirement was waived for the new weapons they received for this event—explicitly on account of the weapons being "too dangerous"! And—let's not forget—these are the same police who were captured on videotape only a few months earlier using Q-tips to apply pepper spray to the eyes of protesters who were already locked down and unable to move or protect themselves. "Protect and Serve" indeed!

and aggressive self-defense. The two French Canadian groups organizing for the protest, C.L.A.C. and C.A.S.A., that accepted this approach, took a lot of heat from the more traditional, cuddlier and cuter, more liberal and authoritarian organization, S.A.L.A.M.I., which, predictably, reserved the right to tell protesters exactly what to do and how to do it. We'll discuss in a couple paragraphs what the results of this kind of organization were for those who permitted themselves to be so controlled.



C.L.A.C. and C.A.S.A. took the wise approach of separating the demonstration into different actions and areas according to level of risk: green for no danger of arrest, yellow for some danger of arrest for nonviolent civil disobedience action, and red for tactics of deliberate provocation (such as attacking the police fence). The green and yellow areas were charted on a map of Quebec, affinity groups at the spokescouncil meetings identified themselves as taking green or yellow approaches (no one spoke about red groups or actions, for obvious reasons, until the action was taking place), and this helped to reassure everyone involved that they knew exactly what risk they were incurring. As it turned out, most people were ready to go a lot farther than they'd expected once the possibilities of the situation were clear, and the police violated their own commitment to respecting the green zone, so the color-level categories were pretty much meaningless by the time the demonstration got going; but they served their purpose ahead of time by making everyone comfortable with setting their own level of involvement and risk.

Because the organizers declared in advance that they were ready for and supportive of "diversity of tactics," most everyone in attendance came prepared to accept this, too: first, those who came knew what to expect, and second, the fact that the organizers were comfortable with this helped others not to be

uptight about it. It only happened a couple times at the spokescouncil meetings before and during the demonstration that some stubborn loyalist to left-wing authoritarian tradition brought up the issue of whether it was wise to "allow" people to use their own judgment about what tactics to apply; and both times, thanks to the fact that C.L.A.C. and C.A.S.A. had already established that they saw this as a non-issue, everyone was able to simply ignore the interruption and concentrate on practical matters.

Planning for earlier demonstrations has often been characterized by endless, pointless, symbolic debates about whether or not organizing committees should "give permission" to protesters to use direct action tactics like property destruction. This time, a lot of time and trouble was saved by acknowledging from the beginning that demonstrators were going to do whatever they believed was right, sanctioned or not by self-appointed authorities, and that the role of organizers should be simply to help coordinate cooperation between different groups. That the demonstration proceeded without any of the tens of thousands of demonstrators present doing anything really stupid to hurt the interests of the others there, despite the fact that there was no "official organization" issuing rules and mandates, is important—it simply proves that anarchy works. And if there are still some who believe that anything other than obedience to rules (*their* rules!) imposed by a centralized power constitutes "ineffective" demonstrating (let alone "violation of their rights"!!), this just shows that some have yet to understand that actual democracy means giving up your "right" to command others.

C.L.A.C. and C.A.S.A. deserve accolades for the hard work they did to make everything possible—they did speaking tours across the continent to raise awareness, helped U.S. citizens work out schemes to cross the Canadian border (a few even got married just to give wedding-invitation-clutching U.S. activists a legitimate reason for entry), arranged for food and housing for the tens of thousands of people converging upon their city. The housing was especially important: at many earlier protests, like the I.M.F./World Bank protest in Washington, D.C. a year ago, traveling activists who had no place to sleep were arrested before the action began for sleeping in their cars or on the street. One indispensable center of activity was the university campus, which hosted thousands of demonstrators in the gym (the sight of so many bodies stretched out across its vast floor in the half light was surreal and beautiful), and lots of important organizational meetings as well in other buildings. Hecate only knows



how those kids persuaded the university to receive all these travelers who had already been branded enemies of the state before they arrived. Individuals from C.L.A.C. and C.A.S.A. were also not afraid to embrace illegal tactics openly (as they did on Friday night at the spokescouncil meeting after the first day of action, when they supported the idea that the next day's actions should concentrate on attacking the fence)—a few of them landed in legal trouble for this, and they deserve our support for the risks they have taken.

Finally—the remaining crucial contribution of the C.L.A.C. and C.A.S.A. organizing was that the march and day of action they organized fell the day *before* the march organized by the more “mainstream,” well-behaved S.A.L.A.M.I. Summer of 2000, at the protests around the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, the day of direct action came after all the other events had ended—so the only activists left in the city were the ones already perceived by the police as “terrorists” (even if they were only armed with puppets!), and the mass arrests and police violence that followed came as no surprise. This time, holding the [first] day for direct action before the main event meant that the events of that day set the atmosphere for the next.

BLACK BLOC PREPARATION AND ACTION: PROVOCATION, OR SELF-DEFENSE?

This was the most organized, best armed and equipped, and, as I've explained above, most broadly supported Black Bloc I have ever witnessed. Considering that many of those in its ranks were in a foreign country, some of them illegally and even with outstanding arrest warrants, I was amazed at how confrontational they had prepared to be: people had brought bolt cutters (for the hated fence) and similar tools, projectiles such as hockey pucks, slingshots and marbles, helmets and homemade body armor, larger shields, and similar equipment. It turned out to be the right decision.

Friday's march began at the university, neither accompanied by nor—strangely enough—harassed by the police, who remained concentrated around the fence both Friday and Saturday (this was fortuitous, for it meant we could move around the rest of the city without serious fear of arrest—which has not been the case at many earlier demonstrations). The Black Bloc was dispersed among the crowd, already disguised but not clearly identified as a group.

Shortly before the march arrived at the fence around central Quebec, those (few, as it turned out) who wished to remain in the green sector split off from it.

The others proceeded on, and as soon as they arrived at the broad square which bordered on the fence, the 'Bloc came together and moved immediately to attack the barrier. Within seconds, a wide section of it was torn down—something not thought possible by most of the protesters in attendance—and a few passed through it. The police quickly appeared in greater numbers from within, firing tear gas; the rest of the day and following night was given over to back-and-forth struggles between the police, who sought more to hold a line than to advance, and the confrontational activists who threw projectiles at them and were reinforced by the numbers of less confrontational activists.

A few might describe the Black Bloc tactics as deliberate provocation, and blame them for embroiling the others at the protest in more violent conflict than they were prepared for, but I would describe what happened differently. First of all, had the wall itself not been challenged, the protest would not have been given any attention by the police, the media, or the locals—furthermore, it would have been unclear what there *was* to do instead: the experience of wandering around all day holding signs in a designated protest zone, ignored by the rest of the world, would have been demoralizing to everyone. Some of those who did attempt pacifist actions such as lockdowns in other zones of downtown Quebec that day related that evening at the spokescouncil that their actions had seemed pointless—the delegates to the summit were already inside the perimeter fence, and had they not been, they could have been delivered with helicopters even if all the roads had been blocked. This was the reasoning of a number of participants in the Black Bloc, too: since it was not possible to stop the summit by keeping the delegates out, they undertook instead to make the whole experience as inconvenient as possible for the heads of state and their lackeys. The next day, in fact, the summit had to be called off until Sunday, because there was so much tear gas in the air around downtown Quebec that it entered the duct system of the building in which the meetings were taking place. So as it turned out, the somewhat antiquated tactics of street fighting turned out to be the most effective for this situation.

But back to the provocation question: clearly the Black Bloc were not the only ones interested in attacking the wall—after the first day of action, at the spokescouncil meeting Friday night, when there were few if any participants present from the 'Bloc, it was decided, by people who had earlier seemed much more timid about doing this, that the next day's actions should concentrate on again attacking the wall. Thus the 'Bloc helped protesters to feel more confident about doing what they already wanted to do, by showing that it was possible. The chief functions the 'Bloc served, thus, proved to be not provocation, but rather *defense* and *demonstration*. *Defense*, because they formed the front lines that protected everyone else from the police. The police, if my experience is correct, had not just assembled tear gas, water cannons, concussion grenades, plastic bullets, and such devices for show—they intended to use them to break up whatever demonstration took place. They were prevented from doing so precisely because the Black Bloc was so organized and ready to fight: every one of hundreds of tear gas canisters shot at the crowds was immediately thrown back in their faces by an initially small number of courageous gas-masked 'Blocers, to such an extent that sometimes one could only tell



"THE ANARCHISTS WHO THREW SNOWBALLS AT ATTACKING RIOT POLICE ON RENÉ LÉVESQUE, WHO FOUGHT THE BATTLES OF THE BARRICADES AROUND THE LATEST BERLIN WALL AND CHOKED BY THE TENS OF THOUSANDS UPON THE TEAR GAS OF THE TOTALITARIAN REGIME, REFUSED TO CONFINED THEIR REVOLT TO THE PRIVATE WORLD DESCRIBED BY PUNK ROCK LYRICS OR THE PUBLIC WORLD DEFINED BY LEFTIST PROPAGANDA. THEY DEMANDED JURISDICTION OVER THEIR OWN HEARTS AND HEADS, INSTANT GRATIFICATION AND PERMANENT REVOLUTION... LACKING THE BOURGEOIS PROPRIETIES OF THEIR INSTRUCTORS AND LABOR LEADERS, THEY TURNED THEIR UPRISING INTO A FESTIVAL OF SPONTANEITY, PLAY, AND SOLIDARITY." —GNOME CHOMSKY, A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES (AND TERRITORIES)

THAT IS TO SAY—REVOLUTIONARIES MAKE LOVE AND WAR.

where the police lines were by the cloud of poison surrounding them; the police feared to close in for arrests, because of the constant shower of rocks, glass bottles, broken concrete, and even molotov cocktails that the streetfighters maintained. I suggest that the other role of the 'Bloc was *demonstration*, because the tactics they used were available to everyone who recognized how effective they were. As I'll discuss in a couple paragraphs, the Black Bloc began as a couple hundred people, and ended up being thousands only a day and a half later.

Mainstream media always praise the pigs for their "restraint" at demonstrations like this, which seems to me to be sheer stupidity: the pigs are fucking *employees*, they do what they're told (especially in front of the cameras!), they don't deserve credit for anything they do—that's what is so disgusting about them. In a situation where everyone else present was taking responsibility for themselves, acknowledging their part in what goes on in this world and acting accordingly, the pigs were the only ones present who were still using the Nuremberg defense to do whatever their masters ordered, even when it meant shooting searing tear gas canisters at the heads of unarmed, non-violent middle-aged mothers (I know this because I witnessed my good friend, an unarmed, non-violent, middle-aged mother, get hit by one such deliberate police attack). If anyone should get credit for "restraint," it's *us*—we always show good sportsmanship, we work willingly with vastly inferior technology (seriously, marbles versus plastic bullets?), we give everyone a David against Goliath show just to demonstrate how much more courageous and intelligent we are. I'm sure of the thousands of people at the demonstration, at least a couple hundred were gun owners—but we didn't ever defend ourselves with lethal weapons, even though they were attacking us with unprovoked violence that would have given anyone cause for armed self defense in a court of law. That's because we're nice people, responsible to each other and even merciful to our enemies, and they're lower than fucking worms. Watch the way they move their bodies in those Halloween costumes and you'll see the murderous machismo of power-addict slaves. Anyway, back to the subject.

Saturday was the "official" protest day for the more "mainstream" organizers, principally the Canadian unions (the "other government," I've been calling them since that day), who demonstrated just how absurd it is to organize anti-authoritarian protests in authoritarian ways. They arranged a giant union march, departing from a place in Quebec City away from all the action and moving through the empty industrial areas, where there was no one to even see them marching, to a

dead end in a park where a small band was playing. The tens of thousands who participated in this march couldn't have felt more like they were wasting their time—even the mainstream newspapers reported that it was all the union marshals could do to keep the workers marching in line away from the real action, let alone chanting along with the monosyllables blaring from megaphones attached to the cars in which their "leaders" rode, resting their precious feet. Anyone could see the difference between their approach to politics and ours by comparing the amount of freedom available to their marchers to the open relationships between autonomous demonstrators on our side of the city.

Meanwhile, we kept up our street war in central Quebec, strengthened by new numbers now surrounding and attacking the wall from all sides. Those who had thought they only wanted to hold signs now backed up masked kids tearing apart the sidewalk to make projectiles. Now, I've always been critical of violence, because it's something that you can turn on but you can't turn off; even more than other tools, it tends to control and manipulate those who apply it. But this somehow didn't feel like violence: everyone who was involved, everyone who was participating, valued the various contributions of the others present, whether they were setting police on fire, providing medical attention to the injured, or simply watching from a distance—everyone felt united and safe with each other. The violence directed from all the human beings present at the only ones there who still refused to be human didn't contaminate us.

PIVOTAL MOMENT

Then, in the middle of Saturday afternoon, something happened that was of pivotal importance, which probably went unnoticed by almost everyone else there. During a lull in the streetfighting, a segment of the Black Bloc proceeded to a multinational bank and smashed all its windows in. At this point a large number of local street kids had congregated, not as protesters, but simply to watch the unfolding events; these locals were sympathetic to the foreigners fighting the police, simply because they were fighting the natural enemy of street kids everywhere, but they were still suspicious of the activists on the grounds that, like the delegates and the pigs, they were foreign invaders. Nothing the protesters had done until this moment raised their wrath—but, having no prior experience with the rationale of property destruction, the sight of a bunch of foreigners smashing up windows in their city enraged them. They followed the 'Bloc all the way around, uh, the block, picking up weapons and threatening them². A couple 'Bloc members tried

² At this point, something occurred which is too funny to disappear into history untold. The locals, following the 'Bloc and harassing them in French and with the little English they knew ("fookers!"), passed by an older liberal guy with a beard, who took great pains to explain to them: "No, they're not fuckers, it's just a bad tactic." Appropriating what they must have misunderstood as a term of more biting abuse, they continued following the 'Bloc, shouting "bad tak-teek! bad tak-teek!"

ONE ORDINARY WEEKEND IS MORE BLOODY



to reason with them—the language barrier proved insurmountable, as did the machismo barrier, and both of them got punched in the face.

These two kids are the ones most responsible for the success of the demonstration, though nobody knows it. They had the humility and focus to turn and simply walk away when this happened, which is fucking amazing, especially considering the reputation the Black Bloc itself has for machismo. If they had not done this, the whole weekend would have been ruined, and direct action activism would have been set back a decade—for the visiting activists would have ended up in a riot with the locals, and every possibility of something positive happening would have been lost.

Given some time to cool off, the locals sent a couple of their number to speak to kids from the 'Bloc. It turned out they really wanted to fight the pigs together with these foreigners, and they respected what they [we] were doing, but needed an assurance that these kids weren't just here to trash their city. This given, on the conditional terms which any anarchist has to speak in when "representing" a larger group, the episode was over and everyone could focus again on the real enemy.

I'm not opposed to property destruction, of course—if it were up to me, every corporate store, office, and factory would be burned to the ground by tomorrow morning—but it was critical that the 'Bloc kids recognize that, under these circumstances, it was an ineffective tactic, because the locals did not understand what it was intended to do. Had they insisted on sticking to 'Bloc dogma, catastrophe would have resulted. Instead, everyone returned to the front lines, and the action reached its heart-quickenning climax.

ESCALATION

As the sun set over Quebec, the police slowly pushed forward to the north, until they were stopped in a standoff at the foot of a freeway overpass. At this point, practically everyone had their faces covered, for protection from the tear gas that filled the air; at the same time, people who had been timid before had lost their fear—from two days of watching police hit in the

head with bottles, of seeing supposedly impregnable walls torn down with ropes, of breathing tear gas until it no longer intimidated them. It was impossible to tell now who had been from the Black Bloc and who had just joined the struggle: formerly apolitical Quebec street youth manned the front lines, throwing back tear gas canisters and rocks as they had seen the activists doing, thrilling in the feeling of reclaiming their city from the powers of police and capital. They hid behind makeshift barricades, running up close to the police line to throw molotov cocktails into it, showing superhuman courage in the face of the riot troops that had had them terrified twenty four hours earlier. Behind these kids, over three thousand people of all ages and backgrounds stood on the freeway, beating out a deafening rhythm on every surface available in support of the street warriors. The street signs, which only two days before had told them where to go and how fast, became sounding boards for their frustration and their conviction that this conflict was worth fighting; the concrete, which had cut them off from the soil beneath their feet and reinforced the corporate propaganda on every street corner proclaiming that the only possible condition was capitalism, competition and cultural standardization and mind-numbing work—that very concrete was torn up to become hammers to play that music of revolt, or else be thrown, carried on the echoes of that percussion, into the faces of the insect-like riot pigs across the road. A piece of North America had been transformed into Palestine, a first world Intifada now raging such as only the most idealistic punks and radicals had dared dream of—and immediately comprehensible and worthwhile to all present.

Below the freeway, in the activist camp that had once been part of the green zone, free food was shared, hundreds danced joyously in circles; spirits were higher than they'd ever been for parades or holidays. People who had never been exposed to the do-it-yourself values of sharing and self-determination immediately apprehended what was going on. It seemed the entirety of the old world was about to puncture and collapse.

Who among us has not spent hours, weeks, whole years of life that, at the end, left us nothing to show

THAN A MONTH OF INSURRECTION.

SCENE REPORTS III

but the physical fact that we survived, that we lived through them? This moment justified even those sad, squandered years—even those weary ones among us who had slogged through decades of tedium and absurdity were vindicated: we had finally arrived at this, the first threshold of childhood. The past behind us that had seemed so senseless, the future ahead unknowable and all the more menacing as we made out handcuffs on the belts of the police, all this was worth it, justified into eternity, so we could live this danger, this freedom, this feeling of breaking through the skin of the world.

There is another world, a secret one made up of all our un-lived dreams and unacted impulses, all those parts of ourselves which find no point of entry into the one that is—it waits, simmering, ready to boil over at six billion different pressure points. When it did, that afternoon, we drank tear gas with gratitude and abandon, we were energized as people sometimes are when the power goes out or hurricanes come—neither plastic bullets nor water cannons could daunt us, for we were living as we had always known we should. The music we made together, beating out our own cadences on the sheet metal of the city, was the eruption of our individual longings into the material world; united in their singularities, they formed a symphony no composer could have authored. It surrounded us, deafening, greater than ourselves; when we closed our eyes, it sounded like singing, like a vast unearthly choir above us.

I would have liked for that song to have gone on forever, to have been our lives. Editing this, now almost two years later, my ears are still ring with those rhythms; perhaps they are just ringing, as ears do after great noises... or perhaps the beat goes on.

That day, for the hours we traded in the currencies of courage and conviction rather than cash and compliance, we were able to cast off all consideration of exchange in our *bodies*, and the space we moved through, as well as our minds: we saw capitalism incapacitated. Better we should see it decapitated!

THE VALUE OF WHAT HAPPENED

We didn't, it's true. We almost did, though, and anyone who tells you different wasn't there like we were there. For a world revolution to take place, there would have to be events going on in every city at once, twice as intense as those taking place in Quebec City around nightfall on April 21st. That probably won't happen for another decade or two. So—let's talk about what was valuable about what *did* happen.

Well, first of all, it got the F.T.A.A. in the news—duh. Not that the corporate-controlled newspapers are ever going to tell the truth about it or “free trade,” for that matter, but at least those who read the newspapers have since had the concept in their vocabulary, and we, thus, a starting place from which to raise the questions we need to. Second, we got some great experience to employ in future demonstrations. Third, we didn't suffer quite as crushing a tally of arrests as we have at some demonstrations, thanks to the defense on the part of the Black Bloc—this means we had less to recover from, fewer hassles to drain our energy and attention.

All those obvious things out of the way—the important thing is that everyone there, the local non-activists especially, got a demonstration of what anarchy is, how it works, how individuals can work together in large enough numbers to overpower the forces of control marshaled against them. The “revolution” isn't some far-off single moment, anyway, it's not the crux of history Marx talked about—it's a process going on all the time, everywhere, wherever there is a struggle between hierarchical power and human freedom. In Quebec, I was part of the largest-scale manifestation of mass cooperation and struggle against control I've ever experienced; I've seen this before, hundreds of times, I've chosen a life of pursuing it, so this particular weekend may not have been as absolutely transforming for me as it was for those who hadn't recognized such a thing going on before—but it was still something amazing, which I will remember clearly until I go to my grave, even if I live through “the revolution” itself first.

In moments like this, living becomes something like music is for the musicians who improvise together: everyone contributes their own theme, but rather than a conflict, a cacophony, the different elements combine to form something much greater and more compelling than the sum of the individual parts. In this sense, the weekend in Quebec was important to me above all because it was a sort of pilgrimage, to a moment of anarchy as irreplaceable as all such moments are.

That's all for the memoirs—now it's time to get out there and create new adventures, touch off new confrontations with our oppressors. Until capital capitulates, yours—C.W.C. Rioters' Bloc

See you on the streets!



genoa

G8 PROTESTS, JULY 2001

[Editor's Note: Tragically, this is only the first half, in unrefined draft form, of the more massive scene report my friend was going to submit to this issue. The second half was to cover this person's Bakuninesque flight through the Alps to escape the police crackdown following the demonstrations, including idyllic hiking scenes and a life-threatening thunder storm atop a mountain peak. But, shortly after the following text arrived, when I was clamoring, as we editors are wont to do, for the rest of it, I received an unnerving email from my friend with references to police investigations ("I'll write you back if I'm still free after this week—they've invaded the house, and...")—and then, nothing, no responses since, and I haven't been able to get any more information. Let's hope my friend is safe, somewhere, and has merely sworn off email or something like that... As for you, dear reader, who may want to participate in the same level of resistance but not under any circumstances to risk being "disappeared," fear not: the more of us take the step of action, the more difficult it will be for them to identify and apprehend each of us. I hope we can one day look back to the trying events in Genoa as a difficult coming-of-age for the new generation of anti-capitalists.]

"I've often wondered if the urge to destroy is really the desire to do away with a way of living that does not bring us joy"—Derrick Jensen

"...[T]heir protest will continue because it is a biological necessity. 'By nature,' the young are in the forefront of those who live and fight for Eros against Death... Today the fight for life, the fight for Eros, is the political fight."—Herbert Marcuse

As the needle descends onto the circular vinyl, I'm resurrecting the memories that were once scored one and a half years ago in the streets of Genoa. The music I'm playing is the new Godspeed You Black Emperor! record, and as the effect of this record escalates, its sound waves remind me of the effects of tear gas, the sound of breaking glass, the sound of people, the image of death, life and fire, the feelings of danger. Accusations of a desire to be associated with the romance of insurgence and insurrection can be forwarded to my address, and after all, as they say, "Love can be found at the end of a gun."

The memory I am referring to occurred in the summer of 2001 in the Italian city of Genoa; where the autocrats of Western Civilization gathered to make yet more decisions on our behalf. This is my story of events—they may or may not be true, but I think it's important to settle rumors, discuss tactics, and ultimately see where we can go from here; and hopefully this account will be appropriate for this. (For another account from the affinity group I was part of please refer to the chapter "The Tracks of our Tears" by Jazz in the book *On Fire: The Battle of Genoa and the Anti-Capitalist Movement*.)

July 2001—We catch the train from the UK to the French town of Nice and sleep in the street for the night. The following morning we're on a train heading towards the France/Italy border, anticipating the border guards' usual antagonism, but thankfully after a brief delay we arrive in Genoa. We dress accordingly, trying to blend in to as "backpackers" to avoid the eyes of the Law. We then manage to find our way to the Genoa Social Forum convergence centre (GSF—the GSF would by the end of the week win my "liberal enemy of the week award"). As the bus drives through the city I feel like Spartacus approaching the Roman Empire; I glance out the windows—I see fences being erected, police patrolling the streets in squads, helicopters, armored vehicles, and cars. It is all my nightmares of a police state that could only exist in the most pessimistic of science fiction, novels actualizing themselves in my reality.

The GSF advise us to stay in a park about a 2km walk along the promenade, a park that has been designated a campsite for the duration of the summit. We set up our tents, wander, acquire some food, talk, and rest. I people-watch the others in the park-cum-campsite; a gathering sense of surrealism interests me in the locals that use the park to walk dogs, lounge in the shade and sun and play tennis.

That evening a meeting is called to organize camp security (not from ourselves, but from the Italian pigs). We discuss why we need to be prepared—especially after the Stockholm police tactic of storming the places where people slept; a gate rota is sorted out, iron bars collected to secure the gate, and an alarm decided upon in case of a raid. (Although there were small groups of people that said that the State could not possibly raid us!)



We meet several English-speaking anarchists, and begin to work out how to achieve our intentions in Genoa. Stories and lives are shared on the beach as we begin to formulate our plans. We form an affinity group of eight of us, all ready to be black-clad.

The most exciting part prior to the weekend of action was the meeting up and networking around the city, where we had to find quaint streets so as not to be stopped by cops (we just didn't want to be unnecessarily harassed), and then met other anarchists to get our tactics understood so we were all fully aware of the affinity groups' intentions. I met many people, probably some of whom I'll never meet again, but just the feeling of a connection because of our desire was an unquestionable moment. We eventually had some idea of how the day of action on Friday was going to be constructed. Some groups would attack symbols of capital such as banks and the rich, some would deliberately attack cops to draw away and concentrate their forces, and others would attempt to pull down fences and attack the "Red Zone" (à la Quebec City actions). We decided ourselves to head towards the Red Zone. That evening, when many people had gathered for social functions, in the cover of darkness and Mediterranean storms we did our best to gather wooden posts, ropes, iron bars, body armor and anything else to "complete our mission." To this day I will always remember the rain storm. The rain was heavy and loud enough for us to carry out everything that we wanted to, but the heat of the local climate created the kind of rain that you could only want more of, how it seemed to find its way into every part of your body, how it dropped into my eyes from my hair. The following day was a relaxed affair of chatting, cooking food, scouting maps and sun bathing. In the evening was the first mass demonstration, against the EU laws on asylum seekers and border controls. It was the first time we would get to estimate how many people were gathered here. We found our way into the menagerie of green, black and red flags and began our tour of Genoa. The mass of people must have been into six figures, and the anarchist bloc was a massive turn out, around 6-8,000 participants—and part of me was wondering whether this was everyone. The demo ended without conflict; it was really a wander in the streets.

The next morning I awoke to start making makeshift body armor that would fit beneath my clothes. I used a cut up sleeping mat and drainage pipes, and many meters of duct tape. All being well, it wasn't my intention to have to use it—I was relying on predicting the situations, and the speed at which I can run—it was more precautionary than anything else. I think in the future, skate and BMX pads are a better solution for this kind of body armor; I did have a bike helmet, and many people had invested in motorcycle helmets. Each affinity group had one person go to a "camp meeting," and then it dawned on me. I looked around. The majority of people that were staying in the camp site were indeed a portion of the Black Bloc, and to this day this was one of the best coincidences I've ever been in. Our intention as a camp was to join in the COBAS demo (a European group of revolutionary Marxists), and then go and do our separate things from there. After some delay we left the camp en masse. We were amazed that this many people dressed in black did not get one ounce of police attention, and we were deceiving the Law. As we descended into the town, calls of "No Justice No Peace—Fuck the Police," "No Borders No Nations— Fuck Deportation" rang from the streets. Once in the town center we realized that there was very little continuity anywhere, no organized marches that we could join, there was just a mass of people, and the only conclusion was that there was already a riot in full flow. This was damaging to our plans, but there was nothing we could do—and perhaps people had already started attacking the cops? In order for our affinity group not to separate we used a word that we would call out if we all needed to come together, think of something uncommon, for example we used the word "Moose." The section of the Black Bloc that I was in got split up at this point; once we regained our bearings we decided to try and make our way towards the Red Zone. With us we had a marching Black Bloc band, and many affinity groups. The sun was hot and unrelenting, I was drinking water faster than I could find some fresh, and on a day like this all shops were shut. So what are the alternatives? Looting. We came across a supermarket, and the next thing we know we are trying to pull off the door shutters, and eventually they came off, and we had the whole shop to our delights. I ran in and got as many cartons of fruit juice as possible, and bags of crisps and light snack-type foods. The sprinkler system triggered itself, and visibility was reduced, as I was running out

I tripped and smacked my right foot on an abandoned cash register. (The pain slowly released itself for the duration



of the day). Once refreshed our affinity group had a re-think and we decided to de-black ourselves and find a quicker route to the Red Zone.

We found ourselves in a park square, where summer bands were playing, people drinking Italian wine, and children were playing. We sat and calmed ourselves in the peace that became a much needed breather; it was almost like being in a fairy tale with Orpheus. I decided to try and find recent news and wandered the street; I met another affinity group, they said "the prison is being trashed, and a fragment of the Black Bloc will be here soon." So with that news we all got back into our other identity. It was not a moment too soon. I looked to my left and there was a barrage of riot cops, and without hesitation they tear gassed the whole area. At this point it was too late to put on my gas-mask, but I could neither retreat to find clean air as in front of me were children as young as 5 screaming, crying and panicking. I did my best to get them behind us and clear the area of tear gas canisters. The gas was overwhelming; once the children were safe I ran in a "safe" direction, at this point I couldn't breathe, see or think—all I could make out was the shape of one of the members of our affinity group. Luckily he was twice the size of me—he picked me up after I called his name and he flushed the gas from my face, eyes, throat. We were safe for the time being, and all of us were fucking furious at the level of disregard shown by the cops for the children that were in the area; in my own mind I declared myself in a state of war.

We decided to head into the city center and join anything going on there. Genoa is a hilly city, so we could see across the horizon and see tear gas and black smoke billowing into the sky above, and hear the continuous firing of "anti-riot weapons" by the Italian State. We eventually found ourselves next to a train station where the road was a dual carriageway with what looked like thousands upon thousands of people. We headed gingerly amongst the crowd as we were expecting hostility because of our dress code, but there was no conflict. I knew a British friend of mine would be in Genoa, but I had no idea where he would be, and as I was walking in the road I heard someone call my name, it was my friend. I was wearing a mask, sunglasses and baseball cap and he still recognized me, and we somehow managed to meet each other at this moment in the space-time matrix! I got chatting to him and he took us closer to the "front line." We equipped ourselves and I put on my gas mask, saying to myself it's now or never. One of the most significant moments, for me, was seeing how many people were suffering the effects of tear



gas but not knowing what to do—some were ignoring it, some washing water straight into their eyes, and others using lemon-juice solution! I saw a middle-aged man in a bad way, his eyes massively swollen and looking in pain. I approached him to assist him in his situation. I was anticipating daggers, but he was very warm and welcoming of my assistance, considering I was dressed the way I was and had a full face gas-mask on. We connected. He thanked me in his best English, and when I waved goodbye, he raised his fist and smiled.

Down at the front line many people were dodging the "mortar bomb"-style tear gas grenades. I've never seen anything like them. When they landed they deposited very dense gas, but didn't get hot and were easy to handle. The cops obviously witnessed how easy it was for us to throw them back. So instead of launching them at a 45 degree angle, they decided to fire them at head height. If you were hit by one of these the effects could be life-threatening. We gathered as much ammo as possible from crumbling walls and pavements, and began disposing of them towards the cops. Things were at a stalemate, no one moving back or forward. We assisted each other in dodging the large tear gas canisters, and we began to hold the cops at bay. We looked around to see if there was anything that we could build barricades out of, but there was nothing. I went back into the crowd and met members of the affinity group, and refreshed myself on chocolate and water. The heat of the day was extremely unforgiving. We went back as a group and momentum had built up on our side: we were pushing the cops back at such a rate that we were able to pick up the stones that we had previously thrown. A supermarket trolley was adapted to transport stones. Things were going well and at a very quick rate of speed. I felt no angst, no remorse, no sadness—I was so focused on the job at hand of watching the air for missiles, trying to breathe in the gas mask, and monitoring cop movements that the whole event was a series of explosive events. The foot that I damaged was the bane of my day, so I had to go and rest. I sat on a doorstep on the side of the street, and waited to regain my energy. It wasn't a moment too soon. I was jogging back to the front line when my ears were subjected to the noise of mechanical screaming; there was an armored vehicle driving straight forward into the crowd of people. People ran. I ran. I looked across the road and saw



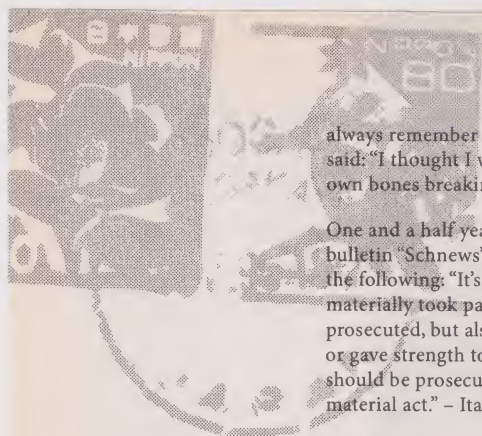
cops running with it hitting and pummeling anyone, and in the other lane a water-cannon was doing its best to shoot down people who were running away from the scene. I turned around and saw the nozzle of a water-cannon pointing at me—I tried dodging it, running in a zig-zag, but it was too late, the next thing I knew I was been blown across the road like a tumbleweed into a crowd of people. I got up and managed to get back into running. A woman fell flat on her face in front of me, I helped her to her feet and I saw her face of terror and absolute fright. There was so much tear gas in the air you couldn't even work out what direction was the best to go in. I lost the affinity group and was on my own. I darted up a narrow street doing my best to get out of tear gas- and water-laden clothes whilst still getting my breath back. A group of people who I thank to this day gave me water and carried my rucksack whilst I gathered my mind, body and energy. They were so accommodating and helped me go through all the back streets to where we were camping.

All I could do now was to wait for my friends to get back. In my waiting I heard plentiful rumors, some depressing, and one rumor became truth. The state murder of Carlo Giuliani. It haunted me, and still haunts today. I later found out that the street battle we were in was very near the scene of Carlo's death. Eventually my friends arrived back as smaller groups or individually. Then, like a sudden storm, another rumor. We heard that the GSF had held a press-conference for the Italian Media, and that they were reported of saying something along the lines of "...The violence today can be solely blamed on the anarchists, the violent majority of which can be found" in the campsite where we are staying. This knocked us all into a temporary state of shock, almost waiting for the first blow to the head by a cop's truncheon. We decided that we should sleep somewhere else that night. In darkness we packed our tents, got ready, and decided how to escape to the GSF car-park where we would sleep in the open with many other people. We dissolved ourselves into an "Official GSF Lawyer Accompanied Group" (the only way you could get this "protection" was to be a member of the GSF!).

The next morning I awake with a sore foot—I probably couldn't run if my life depended upon it—and in circumstances such as these, that wasn't the best thing that could have happened. So we decide to see how the day pans out, and what we can do. We sit at the side of the road and watch the Saturday march go by, but we never did see the end of it, there were that many people! Then we see along the promenade the movements of the riot cops. People begin to move back from where they came. Above us, a helicopter drops tear gas onto anyone. The police offensive is massive, and we have to "retreat." We have no idea what we are going to do, and my friend suggests we head out of Genoa as "scared tourists" on the train somewhere. (We had no intention of leaving this early, but after reading a newspaper report that refers directly to the city we are from back in the UK as a source of troublemakers, we decide that we'd best not have a conflict with The Law.) After walking for many hours we arrive at a small Italian beach town, and the waves beckon our visits. I hadn't washed in over a week; the water was so refreshing, just to swim amongst the crashing waves was a stark contrast to the whole week's worth of events.

We are now on a train heading out of Italy to the Mediterranean coast of France, and are exhausted. I feel good, but my mind has been overworked. Still, deep down between the superficial pain and angst I know that this whole experience has given me that feeling that the risks we took somehow were worthwhile; we fought for our lives, and our desires defended.

I later hear about the cop-raid on the school where many people were staying after the Saturday night march. It was in a British newspaper that I picked up in Nice that reported that a few of the individuals that were beaten were members of the affinity group, and subsequently close friends. Tears shed, and shock lets itself be known around my body. I'm thinking "...that could have been me... but they are my friends!" I managed to get in touch with them, and met them only two weeks later at the Earth First! Summer gathering; thankfully, they weren't injured as heavily as I first thought. The other day I managed to watch the Indy Media video called Genoa—Red Zone. I'll



always remember what one of the victims of that raid said: "I thought I would never hear the sound of my own bones breaking inside my own skin..."

One and a half years on I read the UK Direct Action bulletin "Schnews" (www.schnews.org.uk) and see the following: "It's clear that not only those who materially took part in the devastation should be prosecuted, but also those who facilitated the acts or gave strength to their purpose. These people should be prosecuted even if they didn't conduct any material act." – Italian judge, Elena D'Alosio.

Is it me, or was this exactly the kind of future George Orwell predicted in 1984? The very idea of "thought police" is now a very real concept that is being used to justify state repression. House raids, arrests, charges, state and police repression are happening under the aegis of Berlusconi Big State Business Crew. The hardest part for me is working out exactly where can we go from here. The pathology of civilization seems unrelenting, and there seems no escape even to work out how it's possible to live. Will the cracks in the Empire finally break all the way open? Will we see a downturn of some description in our lifetime? All I know right now is this machine can't carry on unchecked, and for the sake of life's necessity we have to dismantle it. Like they say, "Revolutions always happen, don't they?"

Cited texts and further reading:

Against His-Story, Against Leviathan - Fredy Perlman

Eros and Civilization - Herbert Marcuse

A Language Older than Words - Derrick Jensen

Empire - Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri

On Fire: The Battle of Genoa and the Anti-Capitalist Movement - Various

argentina

DESTINATION: ARGENTINA; PERIOD OF TRAVELS: JULY 1-AUGUST 5, 2002

A travelogue of someone who set out to discover the beauty of the world and the sincerity of the people.

All addresses of the places and names marked with an asterisk are listed in the appendix.

ARGENTINA ARDE!

MAY ARGENTINA BURN!

A slogan and a demand appearing, among many other places, on a lot of house walls throughout the country, especially in the larger cities near Buenos Aires and, of course, in Buenos Aires itself. Fuera Duhalde, chau Duhalde, FMI arde, etc. The country is in a state of awakening.

First, some words concerning the basic situation in the south of South America: hunger, unemployment, death, fighting. In short, the economy of the nation has been totally ruined by the demands of commercial money-lenders, as represented by the rapacious International Monetary Fund. During the period of his time in office, the former president Menem pushed through plans to sell many Argentinean institutions to private owners, in obedience to their pressure. In late 2001, rebellion and revolts began to occur more and more in

response to the economy and the policies of the government; these culminated in the well-known events of the 19th and the 20th of December 2001, when in some areas of Argentina, many people were killed. (Two dates similarly known in Europe are the 20th and the 21st July 2001, the days of the killing of Carlo Giuliani and the assault and the massacre at the DIAZ-school during the protests in Genova, Italy, against the G-8 summit).

Demonstrations, lootings, street fights in some cities, blockades, militant fights against the Riot-Policía and other special units of the government, and a tremendous rise of awareness among the people, as well as their attempts to organize themselves: all of this is a result of the calamities. Mr. Duhalde, the current president, is the fifth president within the last eight months; during this period, 38 people lost their lives because they fought in the streets against these conditions. (The last three presidents before Duhalde had to replace each other within 10 days).

Meanwhile, all these problems spread to Uruguay, one of Argentina's neighboring countries, and showed similar effects: hunger, unemployment, and street-fights in Montevideo—this was some of the news I heard during my last five days in Buenos Aires before I returned to Europe.

My trip started in Madrid, my stop-over on the way to Buenos Aires from Austria: I spent a joyful day there accompanied by a friend who showed me, among other things, the book and record store*(1) of the "Sin Dios" people.

The seriousness of this trip was emphasized by the news of the killings of two Piqueteros, Maxi and Darío, which had happened during a street blockade only a few days before my journey. I really had no idea what was waiting for me in this country.

Moreover, I had no idea where I would sleep in Buenos Aires—but through friends, I got some addresses of people living in Argentina who welcomed us (my travel companion and me) like old friends. The candor and the warmth of the people in South America deeply touched me. Suddenly, the edge was taken off many things because of the simple but very important certainty that I *always* would have a roof over my head and people near me who could help me if there were any problems. A heavy load had been lifted from me.

At the same time, it gave me a really bad feeling to realize once more how privileged I am as an EU-citizen. This can be seen in so many areas that it makes me feel sick. The mere fact that I was there, in that place, already proved it; just like the fact that everything was so "cheap" for me: food, public transport...

The safe-guarding of the capital is immediately apparent, not only during demonstrations but also in other areas: the large banks, for instance, are not merely protected by wood boards, as they were for instance in Genova. No! The windows are covered on both sides by heavy metal sheets that protect the glass from breaking, and which, moreover, cannot be used to set the building on fire. This "protection" was noticeable in most places during my stay there, depending on the intensity of the protests. But here too, traces of the fighting could be seen—the sheets bore graffiti or dents and deformations from the

sticks of demonstrators. All these were signs of deep rage against the government, police and FMI (=IMF = International Monetary Fund).

In general, there is a lot of graffiti and painting on the walls. It's common to see demands for Duhalde's death, or the death of the FMI or of other politicians; sometimes, however, these "only" announce various demonstrations, or assemblies (Asambleas). All of these wonderfully-decorated walls reminded me of Euskadi, the Basque region of Spain where the walls are also covered with information, critique, and anger.

On the day after my arrival, July 3rd, there was a demonstration, the first one I was able to participate in. The reason for it was police repression. The deaths mentioned above of the activists Maximiliano Kosteki (23) and Darío Santillán (21) turned out to have been murders, most likely planned and carried out in cold blood. Memories of the military dictatorship in this country in the late 1970s and early 1980s came back to many Argentines. After some considerations, the daily newspapers printed the photographs which had been taken. They showed that Darío had tried to help Maxi, who was lying shot on the ground. Darío himself was shot dead in cold blood over the severely wounded Maxi. The openness with which this took place was scary. Some of the uniformed killers looked directly into the camera and could easily be recognized on the photos. These actions reminded me of the assault on the DIAZ school in Genova, which was also carried out with a cruel openness that suggested a background support by the Italian government.

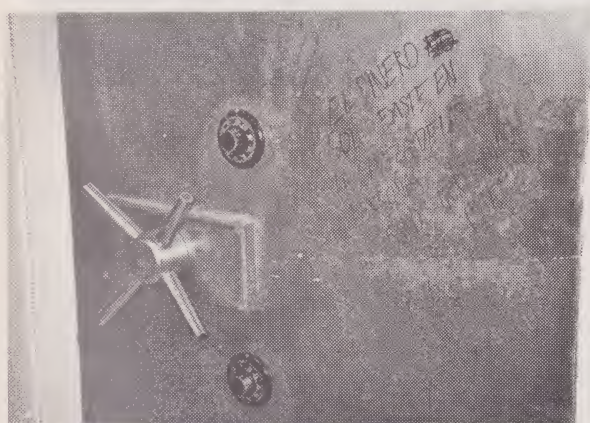
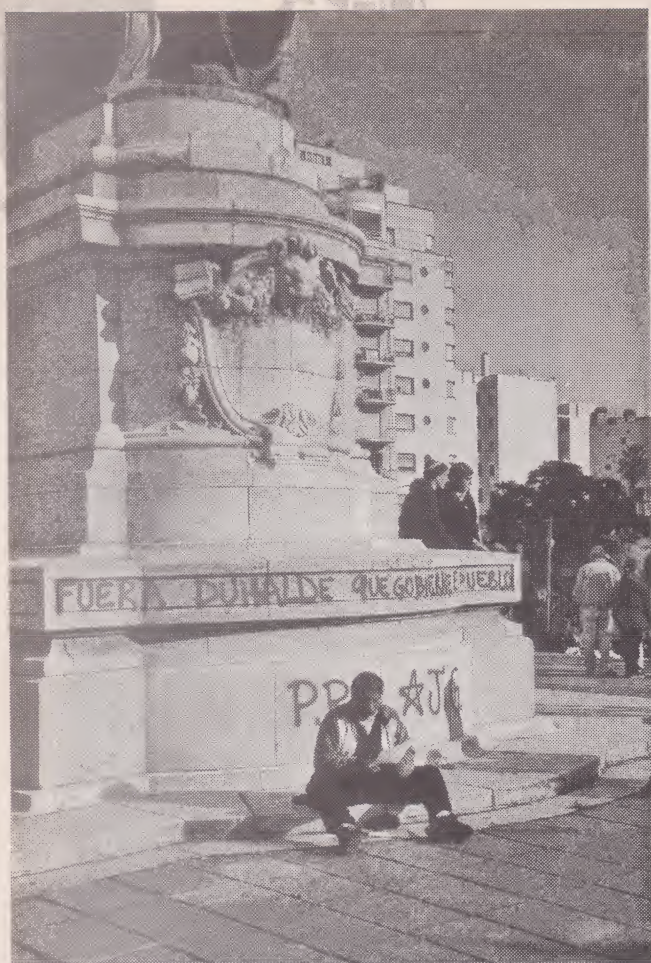
These killings took place as a reaction to the blockade of a very important bridge, a major entrance to the center of Buenos Aires. The people who blockade the streets are known as Piqueter@s. (This use of the @ is seen in critical Spanish; it is an attempt to address the sexism built into the language. Piqueteras—feminine—and Piqueteros—masculine—are combined into one word, in which the a and the o become @. This way of spelling may be compared to the English word "wimmin.") Blockades are a very common and important form of action in Argentina, and efforts are made to link the various activities in a network.

This demonstration went from the train station Avellaneda, the square where the executions took place, via the above-mentioned bridge into the centre to the Plaza de Mayo, the best-known square in Buenos Aires. The demonstration lasted for about four hours in chilly rain; similar to Italy, and in contrast to Germany and Austria, marches are not surrounded by police escorts at all times. There were only two accompanying police—and special units posted along the route of the demonstration, one by the bridge (military police and riot police, some with sharp weapons!) and one for guarding Casa Rosada, the building of the government of Argentina. At the checkpoint by the bridge, some demonstrators were allegedly wounded.

The Casa Rosada is completely sealed off during the demonstrations by very strong iron-bar, about 2.30 m high, behind which there are many riot cops armed for the street fights and for defending the Casa.

It was striking for me, coming from the climate of Austria and Germany (which is rather cold and dispassionate as far as human relations are





concerned), how differently the people in South America act. About 70,000 people participated in this demonstration, which took place in continuous rain. Although there was no street fighting, things were pretty lively: people danced and sang their death-wishes for the government, the FMI, and the police with some very militant words. They were accompanied by numerous drummers who beat time tirelessly and kept the hearts of the demonstrators beating hard. When these people dance, their whole bodies move; they jump with their arms almost flying free of the chest, in a movement that continues into the fingertips. Two or three people start with this beautiful form of protest, and all the people around let themselves get caught in this dance which shakes the ground—and, all of a sudden, there are hundreds moving, and a tremendous strength coming from the mass.

Very often such protests against the government and the FMI are combined with a nationalism that reminds me of the nationalism of the Basque liberation movement. Many people in Argentina come with flags to the demos; this is seen as a criticism of the government and the police units who are not considered to represent Argentina—an idea I found strange, just as I did the singing of the Argentinean anthem after the demonstration. First all this criticism, and then no thoughts on how things really could change and get better—after all the difficulties from the capitalist programs, after military dictatorship, after the government selling the public industries to private owners, after police and military repression, murder, and after millions of indigenous peoples have been dispossessed by imperialism...

The anarchists here too will have to face a lot of enlightenment.

During the next days in Buenos Aires I was able to contact two Asambleas: one of them meets in the northern part of Buenos Aires every Thursday, and the other one every Wednesday closer to the centre in the squatted (occupied?) house Tierra del Sur*(2): Asamblea Parque Lezama Sur*(3). The information for the first Asamblea was given to me by a journalist who originally came from New York. She has lived in Argentina for 10 months and has created a web page in English calles Argentina Now*(4), which reports on what is going on there.

"EL PUEBLO EN LAS CALLES CONSTRUYE SU PROPIA HISTORIA" OR, THE NEW DISCOVERY OF THE WHEEL

The *Asambleas* were started as an answer to the situation in the country, a response to the repression, the murders. Many people simply got together in public places, parks, or churches to discuss what could be done to improve the situation, and which activities could be used for resistance against the government.

There are about 200 *Asambleas* in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, which are now in permanent contact with each other. Rotating delegates are sent to the "head meetings"—the "Interbarrales" (barrio = district). These delegates may be authorized to make decisions for their Asamblea. It is moving to see how this autonomous administration works.

The Asambleas show a wonderful strength and sow a great amount of solidarity into the hearts of the people. What makes these Asambleas a wonderful weapon is the fact that people from very different levels participate, from the two-year-old toddler to the 70-year-old grandmother. All of them take part in the Asamblea, able to share their ideas, problems, and wishes without any hierarchies—at least, that's what I saw.

Many of these ideas are really beautiful, and these ideas need space to be developed. Therefore, these people made plans as to where they could make a cultural centre. And as the buildings of the "Banco Mayo" stood empty because of bankruptcy, the idea was near at hand to squat them.

This happened two weeks after my arrival in the district Barracas. The people there told me that this was not the only building of this bank-group which had been squatted. It indeed is a strange feeling to spend some time in a squatted bank, to sleep there, to watch children playing and being creative, simply to make living space out of this deadly building. What a change has happened there!

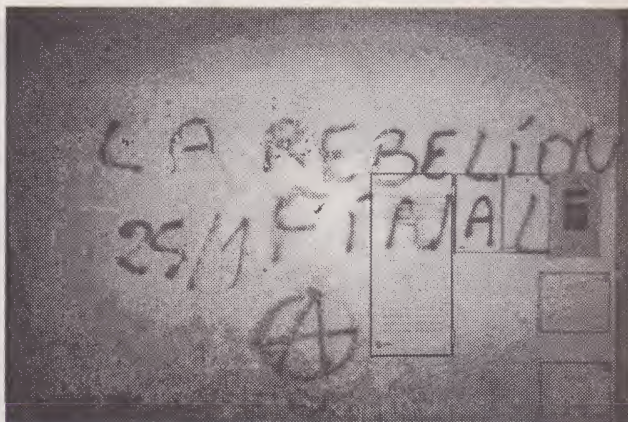
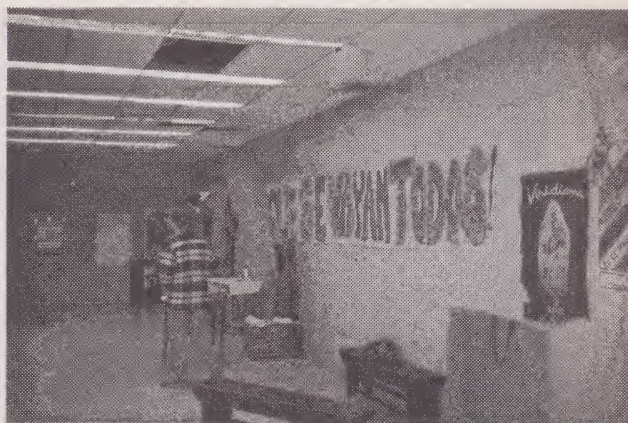
What is next? What comes after the squatted villages in the Basque country? What after these banks? What after the factories? Streets, woods, embassies, offices, trees, hearts... How many people meet in these places for the first time, where there is a feeling of community? Which friendships start here, which projects? Which dreams are dreamt here which people will later realize together?

At a concert addressing the death of Carlo Giuliani (20.07.2001), a friend of mine spoke thus: *"Not until every police(wo)man has a relative who also protests in the streets, will these uniformed people cease to fire their weapons."*

All of a sudden, it seemed to me that this could take place in a different way, even without force. Take the cultural centre of this Asamblea Lezama del Sur, the squatted bank: because of the many activities organized for children, it might happen that the son or daughter of a policeman found his/her way into the bank, into this self-governed building, and made friends inside it. How could such a policeman think of evicting his own child from such a daycare centre?

The police came three times, as far as I recall, and asked what was going on there. But after some people explained that this was now a social centre, they went away without giving them any trouble. In my talks with the squatters, the people of the Asamblea, it turned out that the police acted in such a discreet way because it seemed unwise to clear a squat like this one when the political situation was so vague and the solidarity of the people with each other so overwhelming. This is so important: solidarity within the Asamblea. The police would not just have to fight against a few marginalized squatters, but against a huge mass of people—mothers, fathers, children, grandmothers, grandfathers, etc.

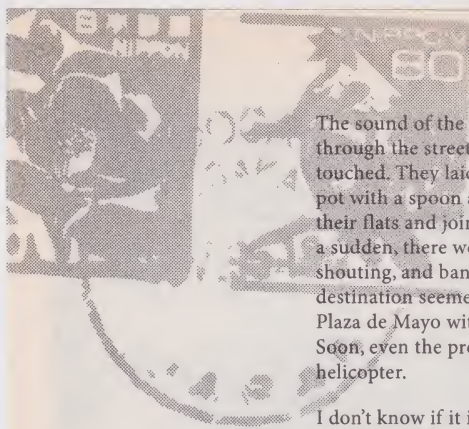
As for solidarity: Directly after the squatting, a man working across the street in the office of a leading Argentinean telephone company offered to supply them with electricity. The nearby grocer immediately offered them a discount when he learned they were buying food for the Asamblea.



THE COMPARISON WITH SPAIN IN 1936? AND A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE CACEROLAS DEMONSTRATIONS IN BUENOS AIRES.

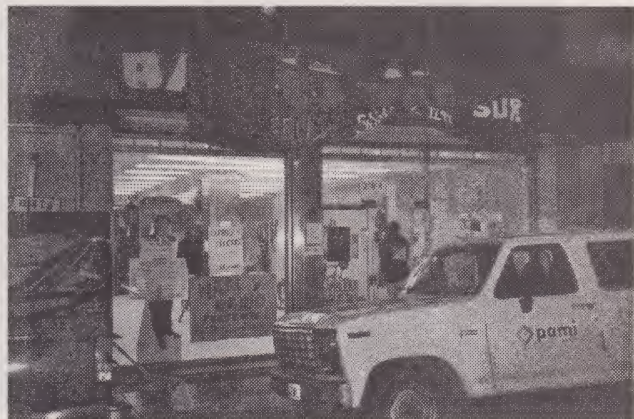
The friend in Buenos Aires who introduced us to life in the metropolis told me such wonderful stories about those now infamous days of December 2001.

The people had had their fill with all the events—the crash of the economy, the widespread hunger. It thus happened that a few began to stand in the streets, each armed with nothing but a cooking pot ("cacerola" in Spanish) and a tool to beat on it. They did not really know why they did it, but it seemed to be a way of protesting, and they found themselves laying claim to the streets, giving voice to feelings shared by so many others...



The sound of the banging cooking pots echoed through the streets, and others heard it and were touched. They laid down their work, took a cooking pot with a spoon as an instrument of protest, left their flats and joined the people in the streets. All of a sudden, there were thousands of people running, shouting, and banging through the streets. The destination seemed to be clear to all of them: the Plaza de Mayo with the Casa Rosada at one end. Soon, even the president had to leave the "Casa" by helicopter.

I don't know if it is possible to make a comparison with Spain in 1936, and I shall never know it, but I think that everything that is happening in Argentina is something very special (let's help



make it something usual!) in the present situation of the "New World Order": All these revolutionary movements, all the struggles from the Piqueter@s' street-blockades to the self-organizations in the Asambleas, from the power of the Cacerol@s to the mass demonstrations, graffiti, lootings—all these activities can lead to more, and the future is as always uncertain and exciting. Perhaps it is not necessary to compare the conditions in Argentina with any other situation in the world or its history; it is important in its own right.

WEST TO MENDOZA "I HOPE YOU WIN..."

We left Buenos Aires to travel by bus across the whole latitude of the country, from the Río Plata to the foot of the Andes. I was happy to see a wonderful sunrise, the snow-covered mountains dipped in pink before me and the rising sun behind me. I experienced this after a night ride on the "Colectivo" (bus), the usual way of traveling in Argentina since almost all the trains have been stopped due to lack of money.

Once again, we stayed with people we had gotten to know through friends, and again we were received with the wonderful candor I experienced there so often. This time we were accommodated by the artists of the "Argonautas," a theatre group in Mendoza. Once again, the presence of children fascinated me. In Argentina, children occupy a totally different place in the social fabric than the one I am used to. The children there hardly ever experience a feeling of being excluded, and they are allowed to participate in many activities; whereas, in Central Europe, it's my experience that children always are "sent to bed," and thus, against their will, excluded from social life. The "Argonautas" people told me that there was a squatted cultural centre in Mendoza, although unfortunately I didn't manage to visit it; however, I was told that the emphasis there was also put on work with children.

"I hope you win," the man behind the counter said when I told him why I just had spent three and a half hours before the Internet PC, and in what kind of work (anti-capitalist) I am involved. "I hope WE win," I answered, and he knew exactly what I meant.

This little encounter reveals the spirit that thrives throughout the country, a spirit often called solidarity. For me, it was like finding a well of water shortly before dying of thirst. The chance to tell so many different people what I do and what my work is about, and to be congratulated for doing it by a man entering my life as a "normal" worker in some place or other, gave me a lot of energy, especially for my life in my usual surroundings in Europe. And the idea of joining with so-called normal people in our struggles, or at least letting them in the know, is something very beautiful; if we anarchists all began to tell everyone we encounter what we are working at, at least in rough outlines, it could be very effective. In order for our efforts to endanger the ruling system, even the so-called normal people have to discuss change, not just the "left elite."

THE WAY OF PROTEST BY THE PIQUETER@S

Once, I was at such a street blockade: first, tires are laid down across the street and set on fire. Then all kinds of things are put on the street in order to

R: That thing, that was one of those moments
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erect a stable blockade which is then protected by people. Depending on the situation, of course, there are different ways of proceeding. It is interesting and inspiring to see the militant appearance of the people marching towards such blockades; they are masked and armed with iron rods.

During the last months, there was even a movie made in Argentina: *Piqueteras*. In this film, various Piqueter@s' activities are shown and Piqueteras(!) are interviewed. The militant behavior of the blockaders can be seen here, too, as well as the procedure of the police and the special units against the blockaders; these reports come from rather rural areas: Cutralco (province Neuquén), Mosconi (province Salta) and Plaza Huincul (province Neuquén)—Piqueter@s fighting the riot police who attack with tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets as well as some live ammunition, and are answered with slingshots and stones. The determined proceeding of these protesters is immensely inspiring for the fights in other parts of the world.

This is a viciously abbreviated version of a much longer report by ReCistencia. To read it in its entirety, contact wc_prelude@everymail.net

Appendix:

1. *La Idea-Difusión Libertaria*, C/ Sta. Bárbara, 7 28004 Madrid (sindios@nodo50.org)
2. "Tierra del Sur" Centro Social, Olavarria 1293, Buenos Aires (tierradelsur@latinmail.com)
3. *Asamblea + Casa okupa-Parque Lezama Sur*, Suarez 1244, Barracas, Buenos Aires
4. *Argentina Now* <http://argentinanow.tripod.com.ar>

More contacts:

5. *Biblioteca y Archivo Histórico Social*, "Alberto Ghirald" Paraguay 2212, 2000 Rosario, Argentina (ghirald@hotmail.com)
6. *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina-F.O.R.A.*, Coronel Salvadores 1200 LaBoca, Buenos Aires
7. *Federación Libertaria Argentina-F.L.A.*, Brasil 155, Buenos Aires

and always very hot:

<http://argentina.indymedia.org>

<http://uruguay.indymedia.org>

<http://www.indymedia.org>

colombia

A REPORT FROM COLOMBIA: CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION BY FORCE

(Hey, North American/European punk kid—this is for you, if you'd like a little more perspective on why it's important that you show up at actions against the World Bank/I.M.F., W.T.O., F.T.A.A., and so on.)

The imposition of corporate globalization requires the initiation of structural reforms. These measures, promoted by the World Bank and the IMF, are the conditions for the inclusion of Latin American countries in the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. With these reforms, capitalists propose to diminish or annihilate all the people's achievements over the past decades. Latin America is being confronted with

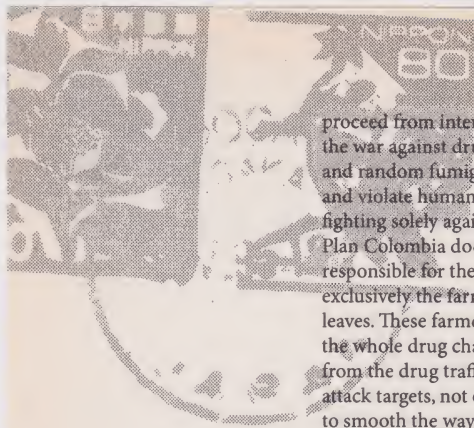
demands for labor "flexibility," privatization of public enterprises, acquiescence to cultural imperialism, suppression of environmental regulations, and other concessions which enable the exploitation of land, life, and labor by multinational corporations and their networks.

In this way, Latin America is being shaped into a massive market where the lords of capital are the only beneficiaries. However, strong resistances have emerged around the continent: MST and MTST in Brasil, EZLN in Mexico, MAS in Bolivia, "los Piqueteros" in Argentina, indigenous communities in Ecuador, a whole network of social struggles that have been shaped in the last couple of decades. These groups are fighting against neoliberal reforms, and most of them are organizing collective economies and alternative ways of life which defy the order imposed by capitalism. In Colombia, the multinationals' CEOs are not only facing the diverse action of social movements, but also the guerrillas, who are seen by some as the armed wing of the resistance. Although the guerrillas' political propaganda is not a great worry for the establishment, its military force is a dangerous threat that must be defeated by the promoters of corporate globalization.

But in this conflict between the forces of oppression and resistance, we are faced with a new blow from the right wing with the election of the current Colombian president, Alvaro Uribe Vélez. After massive propaganda promoting order and authority, Uribe obtained his victory in the first round, and declared "State of Seizure" August 7, 2002. To the uprising of the people—the rebellion of men and women who do not want to see their lives reduced to merchandise, people that refuse to be subjugated to economic variables, who recognize that this new phase of capitalism is leading to absolute misery—the president answers with military measures that have been incorporated into our everyday lives. The State's fight is not only against guerrillas, but against all those social movements who continue to offer opposition. Declaring every antagonist force "terrorist" and thus illegal, the government attempts to silence the screams of the multitude for freedom and equality.

Some of the military measures being implemented in the current State of Seizure include searches without warrants, detention of people on suspicion alone, "rehabilitation zones," interception of communications, and the creation of a whole network of informants who get paid for notifying the police of "irregular situations" and possible "terrorists." The National Strike was harshly repressed by the police last September; similarly, a Youth March was forbidden and surrounded by military forces, the "Permanent Assembly for Peace" (a Non-Governmental Organization) was raided October 25, the "cleaning" of some neighborhoods in the city of Medellín was used as an excuse to arrest various community leaders, and the National University was closed a week before Colin Powell's visit. In the same manner, right wing paramilitary activity has increased considerably in the past year. Last September, some farmers were killed, and there exists an ongoing persecution of teachers and leftist militants, including the detention of the president of the Trade Union "USO" with charges of rebellion and the recent disappearance of one student at the Industrial University of Santander.

The State of Seizure smoothes the full initiation of Plan Colombia. This plan was developed secretly by the US and Colombian governments, and has an estimated cost of US \$7.6 billion, of which US \$3.5 billion must



proceed from international aid. This Plan hides behind the war against drugs in order to commit dangerous and random fumigations, escalate the internal war, and violate human rights. The US argues they are fighting solely against narcotraffic, but the reality is that Plan Colombia does not attack the great drug lords responsible for the narcotics market, but assaults almost exclusively the farmers who cultivate and transport the leaves. These farmers are situated in the lowest stage in the whole drug chain, and receive insignificant profits from the drug traffic. The farmers are now the perfect attack targets, not only for their resistance, but also to smooth the way for the new agroindustrial plans of the capitalists. This is why we are experiencing the erection of new military bases with US personnel, the purchase of helicopters and weapons from warmongering multinationals, and the constant menace of an international invasion that would only benefit the national and international oligarchy. US intervention in Colombia is not presented in its spectacular display of military power as in Iraq, but as a war of "low intensity," aided by the paramilitaries and the fascist president who controls public opinion through nationalistic propaganda.

This last issue can be confirmed by the example of an upcoming referendum that is being presented by the President as the direct legislation of the people. People are being asked to vote to combat political corruption, but the referendum includes neoliberal structural reforms, such as tax and labor policies. With this referendum, the President is asking Colombian citizens to vote their own death: with this vote, people will make legitimate the fascist policies of the current government. However, strong opposition is rising from a united left, that is presenting an abstention campaign as the only solution against the referendum.

ANARCHISTS IN COLOMBIA

Although the anarchist movement is fairly small compared to other left movements in Colombia, people continue to organize collectives and coordinate networks in order to gain ground in the struggle against capitalism and towards the formation of a free society. After some years of forums and demonstrations against FTAA and WB meetings, anarchists are mostly interested in working directly with the people. This is why some collectives are doing direct contact in neighborhoods, universities, and schools, among other possible spaces. There is an ongoing link between anarchists and independent media centers, as well as a steady participation of activists in national demonstrations and theoretical work.

There is a great need for people to realize that the whole nationalistic discourse is just a weapon used by the State to maintain its order; anarchists are trying to address this issue by involving themselves in antimilitary causes, antipatriotism, and abstention campaigns against the referendum.

The majority of known guerrillas in Colombia have a Marxist-Leninist background which clashes with anarchist ideas. However, there are libertarian militants who prefer to work with a minimum base of agreements in order to unite forces against capitalism. In this way some libertarians have joined their ranks.

HARDCORE AND THE COLOMBIAN SITUATION

The recent contact with other South American scenes, and the current conditions in our country, have caused a reevaluation of hardcore's role as a countercultural manifestation. Many bands continue in the whole "street and unity" NYHC thing, but several bands and labels are now denouncing the economic and political circumstances, and some are taking direct action.

Shows are now far more diverse, and you can attend gigs in different neighborhoods. There are also benefit shows, and some are done in universities or public spaces. Some kids are starting projects with displaced people, and others are forming countercultural collectives. One clear example is the CrimethInc. Colombian Cell, "Criminal!" They recently released 1000 copies of "Heraldo" (Harbinger) and organized a couple of shows with expositions and videos about Seattle, the FTAA in Colombia, and the MTST in Brasil.

Last year, along with various punks, we organized the first Colombian anarcho-punk congress. We prepared presentations and discussions about "Plan Colombia," the FTAA, straightedge, DIY, antimilitarism, counterculture, feminism, and vegetarianism. It was a four-day gathering where meals were collectively prepared, where we were able to share opinions and learn among other hardcore/punk kids about the situation in our country and the different activities against capitalism emanating from hardcore. We finally made some future plans of organizing the Colombian anarcho-punk federation.

Right now some kids are concentrating on putting on shows to collect money for anarchist collectives and to exercise propaganda against the above-mentioned referendum. In a general sense, there seems to be an increasing relation between hardcore and the diverse Colombian social movements.

Montag (xmontag5x@yahoo.com,
www.banderasnegras.8m.com)

Behind Enemy Lines

isle of skye

INSIDE FRONT SPECIAL REPORT: IN
SEARCH OF THE BARON

by CrimethInc. Private I Marlowe

Some of them went on to form Zygote, their drummer now plays in Muckspreader, and their singer lives in isolation on the Isle of Skye, as a blacksmith forging medieval weapons—no joke!

-Inside Front 11, Amebix retrospective

By hook and by crook I had found myself in Edinburgh, Scotland, of all places. While the details of that journey are too twisted to tell here, one day while idly checking my email at the local library I remembered I had heard a rumor (from *Inside Front*, too!) that the Baron, the lead singer of the infamous Amebix, had moved to the Isle of Skye off Scotland. I suddenly realized that I was only a few hours' journey from the Baron himself! Action had to be taken. I surfed the Internet for hours, reading old Amebix interviews, and finally came upon the Baron's human name: Rob Miller. The first clue! Then, searching Google for "Isle of Skye," "Rob Miller," and "Sword," I found the name of the current location of the Baron, the aptly named "Castlekeep Forge"... specializing in hand-made swords, without modern technology! Suddenly, I realized it was my divine (although the Amebix would have preferred *infernal* to *divine*) mission to retrieve a blade from the Baron.

Getting to Skye was easier said than done. I frantically emailed Rob Miller, attempting not to sound like the deranged and psychotic Amebix fan that I am, but instead a friendly sword aficionado who only, on the side, happened to be mildly interested in this particular Rob Miller was indeed The Rob Miller, aka The Baron, of the Amebix. His response proved my research correct: "Ay, that's me."

Earlier, I had spent some time trying to track down the mysterious Degsy or "Deek," the singer of Oi Polloi. When I had first got to Edinburgh, most of my impressions of this town had come from brilliant Oi Polloi songs such as "Bash the Fash." To be honest, I was a bit disappointed that I was not fighting fascists on the streets with Oi Polloi. Although apparently every member of the rather small Edinburgh punk scene with the barest inkling of musical talent had been in Oi Polloi at one time or another, currently his whereabouts were mysterious. There was a rumor he was either living with one of his side-project bands "Fucktheirsystem" (whose first record has the brilliant title "Fuck their Fucking System"!) in Finland, doubtless riding motorcycles with Ümlaut with the Lapland Popular Front, or studying Gaelic, the ancient traditional language of Scotland, on the Isle of Skye. Imagine, maybe Degsy from Oi Polloi was hanging out with the Baron. Maybe on that remote island they were plotting to create the greatest crust-punk record of all time.

Now there was the problem of getting to Skye. While apparently Skye was something of a tourist destination during the summer, it was nonetheless a remote island that absolutely no one visited during the dead of winter. Having just got to Scotland, I had only the vaguest clue how to get to the Isle of Skye via public transportation. I didn't even know if any roads went there, and I had lost my atlas! While miserably contemplating this situation in the local anti-capitalist coffee shop (to be exact, a coffee shop that, while owned by a capitalist rat, had a staff who displayed remarkable liberties with their coffee and food that would make any CrimethInc. agent proud!), one of the employees revealed that he was actually from Skye! When I asked him how Skye was, he would respond with odes to its mountains and strange remarks about fairies. Mountains and fairies! He also gave me the web page and schedule of the



BLACK MEDICINE ARMY FACTION PLOTS TO VISIT THE BARON HIMSELF IN SECRET ANTI-CAPITALIST COFFEESHOP IN EDINBURGH

ferry that took one from Mallaig, the closest town to Skye one could reach via land, and was off. There was apparently some type of bridge and a bus one could also take there, but why take the bus if one can cross via ferry!

At the last minute I had my doubts. It seemed much more sane to go sometime in spring when the buses were operating and things on Skye were open. There were also rumors of a blizzard coming from the South. But one friend I had told about the trip got even more excited than myself, so, not wanting to be left out, I went along with her. The ride up to Mallaig was beautiful, and as we got further and further outside Edinburgh the land became wilder

us and Skye. Suddenly, our collective hobo instincts took over: Let's hitchhike by boat!

Mallaig is a fishing town, and right next to the empty ferry dock was a fishing dock. It was approaching evening and most fishermen were coming home. Storm clouds were clearly rolling in. Not being exactly sure how to hitchhike by boat (I mean, do you just stick out your thumb on a pier?) we decided to talk to a group of fishermen who were getting off their boat.

"Hey, do you know of anyone going to Skye?"

"Ay, at this time I don't think anyone is going. The weather's been shite all day and getting worse. You'll have to wait till Monday. Well, crazy Ewan might take ya..."

However, no one saw Ewan around. Immediately, despair set in. No one could even hear us scream for a ride on the pier, since most of the fishermen were inside their boats. Luckily, a stout and magnificently mustached man suddenly appeared out of nowhere, merrily trotting towards a little



HITCHING A RIDE ON THE BOAT OF EWAN THE MAD

and wilder, the mountains larger and larger, and my expectations higher and higher.

The train tracks literally ended in Mallaig, a small, sleepy little fishing town. I had somehow left my schedule at home, but remembered the ferry only came twice a day, once in the morning and once before the evening around 5 o'clock. Looking at my watch, I had only a few minutes left. We jumped off the train and ran for the dock, only to be greeted with a wide expanse of ocean where the ferry should have been. Clearly, something had gone awry. I ran to the office of the Calmac Ferry Company, and asked them where the ferry was.

"The ferry doesn't run on weekends."

Definitely an ill omen to begin a journey.

"When does the next one run?"

"Monday morning."

Not good at all. The last thing I wanted was to spend my weekend in small town in the freezing cold of northern Scotland, where I didn't know a soul, especially when I could be tracking down the elusive Baron. Still, five miles of churning ocean lay between

boat. We immediately stopped him and inquired if he was Ewan.

"Ay, I'm Ewan."

We were saved! While Ewan wasn't planning on going back to Skye today, he seemed impressed with our determination and perhaps more impressed with our willingness to give him a bit of hard cash in return for the favor. Finally, after long deliberation, he agreed to take us on. He told us to wait at the bottom of a creaky and rusty ladder than descended more or less straight into the ocean. We climbed down, and then a little tugboat pulled up, the *Old Grimsley*. We threw our backpacks straight over the water—praying they wouldn't fall short—and jumped into the boat. Ewan waved us aboard and the boat took off erratically.

Nothing had prepared me for this trip. Ewan was no ordinary man, but a St. Francis amongst fishermen, surrounded by a bevy of animals. He went through great pains to post a sign up in Skye looking for his pet cat Wee Jimmy, who he carried pictures of in his pocket. His good mate Sammy the Seagull would fly manic circles around his boat and perch himself on the helm, and swoop dangerously close to your

head—and Sammy followed the boat the entire trip! Lastly, he admitted he was not only a Jehovah's Witness but a former alcoholic. It was going to be one hell of a ride.

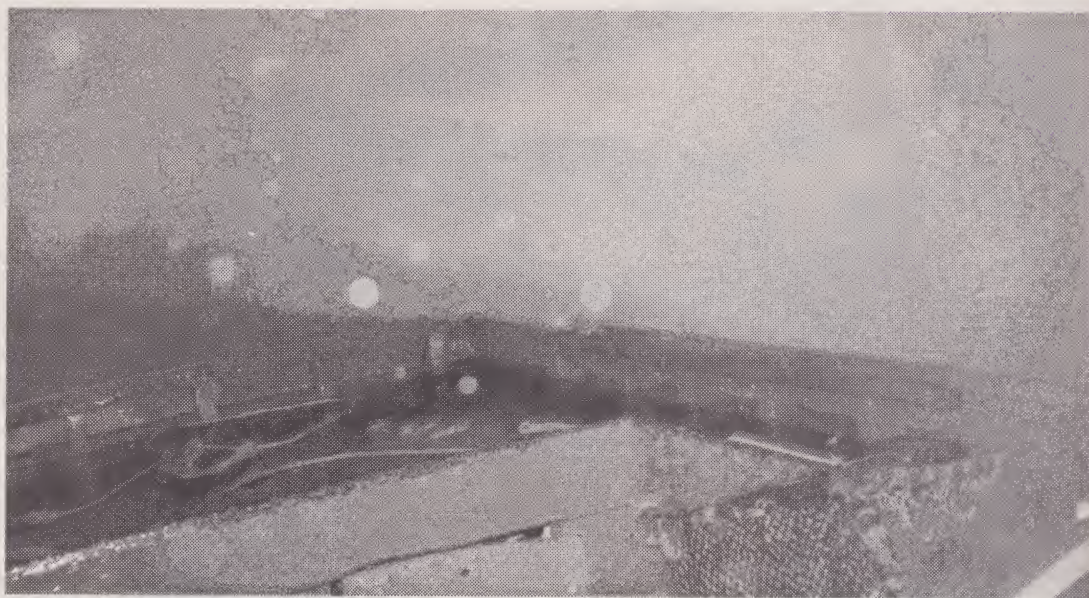
As soon as we got out of sight of land, he offered us some coffee. We agreed, with very cold rain pelting down on us. I quickly threw my waterproof jacket over my backpack to defend its contents from the storm, but it was too little too late and I was getting soaked to the bone. As he was busy preparing the coffee on a decrepit stove he had in his cockpit, and while we were occupied barely avoiding an increasingly hungry and irritated Sammy the Seagull, he started not paying any attention to actually driving the boat. As the boat became increasingly erratic in its behavior,

large waves started coming over the boat, soaking me. Things got even more hectic when Ewan started trying to serve us coffee, as the boat shook so much as soon as he got close enough to hand us the coffee, the boat would rock, causing the coffee to spill out and burn our hands. Finally, I managed to get the coffee in my hand and shovel it down my throat just as I noticed I was starting to get

seasick. Ewan began revealing his deep dark secrets, confessing of his deep hatred of alcohol, his enduring love of his cat, and the fact that he had lived in his boat for a few years. We swapped stories about living in various strange forms of transportation. Ewan also bemoaned his inability to get a proper wife, being a poor fisherman, and I told him how my life in the back of a van presented insurmountable problems for romance. I still wondered how much he really drank, as our drunken boat barely escaped capsizing a number of times. Grey mist descended upon the boat. A mobile phone my friend had lent me for "emergencies" was now completely destroyed by salty brine. Yes, the home of the Baron destroys all technology.

We approached the distant Isle of Skye, and, as if timed perfectly by the crust-punk gods, a giant rainbow crossed from the mainland to the Isle. The Baron must have had some hand in it. Ewan waved us off as we climbed yet another rusty and treacherous ladder towards shore, into the mysterious village of Armadale. Being frozen and wet, we decided to attempt to get into the nearest warm place—but the entire town was closed! All the tourist shops, all the restaurants (well, all two restaurants—Armadale was

more a village than a town), everything was closed. No one in sight. Finally, an old man walking a very skinny dog came down the road, and we asked him if anything was open and warm. He seemed more than a bit shocked we had come to Skye in the middle of the winter. He pointed us down to the Armadale Hotel where we could get warmed up and get a place to stay the night. However, the Armadale hotel was just as mysterious as the rest of Skye. As we walked in there was absolutely no one there! Skye was a ghost town! So we walked inside the hotel to warm up in the lobby. Suddenly, a strange voice said from out of nowhere, "Hey, come over here and play some pool." I peeked around the corner, and the next room over was a bar filled with several drunken Scots.



THE RAINS AND WAVES NEARLY KILL YOUR POOR AUTHOR ON THE BOAT, BUT SKYE APPROACHES IN THE DISTANCE!

"You wanna dram?"

I had no idea what a dram was, to be honest. I figured out, being at a bar, it had something to do with alcohol, so I refused. However, this was taken as violating Skyian social taboos, so when they asked yet again I hesitantly agreed. As I lifted the strange clear liquid to my mouth, my taste buds were greeted by one of the harshest alcohols I had ever tasked—even more harsh than some of strange homebrews and moonshine I had tasted in my reckless youth in North Carolina. The locals smiled at my reaction and immediately offered another. The bar at the Armadale Hotel was a truly fascinating and stunningly egalitarian bar. There was apparently no 'bartender' per se, but every one of the locals seemed to take turns serving each other endless amounts of "drams." As we waited around, the bar soon became the place in town to hang out. One strange old man after another would maneuver inside and sit down, chatting in a strange mix of Gaelic and Scots that was mostly indecipherable to me. One of the most interesting characters was an ancient old man with a cane, who was obsessed with whistling John Denver's "Country Road, take me home, to the place I was born..." I befriended him by knowing the words by heart. Also, a large amount of the Armadale winter

residents were students at the Gaelic college, and they all knew Degsy from Oi Polloi, who was studying Gaelic in Skye! Unfortunately, no one there actually knew where the Deek was that weekend. Also, my friend was getting quite drunk on the drams, and when it was revealed in the course of conversation that we were not dating, an entire bar of male-small-island-trapped sexual frustration came simmering to the surface. One large man started hitting on her, mixing his romantic aspirations with various insults at her for being "a terrorist," since she was of Indian descent. Luckily, the rest of the bar residents were against blatant racism and war, and soon the bar became involved in a heated argument—and

bar stood by, aghast at my act of violence. The fat man scampered off to the bathroom to hide, and I realized that despite my good intentions I had just done something completely socially unacceptable and should exit the bar immediately. The rest of the bar began quickly apologizing for the fat man's behavior, and I just smiled: "I think it's time to go." We had just gotten kicked out of the only warm place we knew of in Armadale. Later, when we got to Fraser's place, a kindly old man with no small obsession with Scotch and beautiful Goethe quotes, he gave us a warm bed for a bribe. That night my friend berated me about what she viewed as all-too-typical male violence, and I apologized for my quick temper and

even quicker reaction-time. Honestly, I wasn't sure how I should have dealt with that situation—I mean, anarchists shouldn't just choke people who are hitting on their friends too hard—but what do you do when your friends are confronted with physical violence? I went to bed feeling sick.

The next morning I realized we were going to have a problem. First, it had started snowing. Second, we knew that the Baron had his forge somewhere between Broadford and some other place named Elgol, but that was at least fifteen miles away and no buses were running Sunday. Lastly, no one was driving around, leaving us few hitchhiking options—and due to my act of violence, the only warm place in Armadale had kicked us out. Clearly, it was an emergency. I found

a public phone on the dock where Ewan had dropped us off, and called my friends at the anti-capitalist coffee shop in Edinburgh. Within a few other calls, I found the phone number of a chef who was a friend of my friend from Skye at the coffee-shop. She said we could stay at her place and she was going to pick us up after she got off work. We wandered aimlessly in the snow and rain through various strange castles and deserted gardens (Skye is simply full of at least two castles and innumerable beautiful vistas, but during winter the tourist attractions are all shut down and the locals, like locals everywhere, pay them no attention) until we finally gave up on our friend-of-a-friend and just starting trying to hitch out of Armadale. The first person who drove by picked us up, a kindly old fellow. I asked him if he knew the Baron, and he replied that not only did he know the Baron, but he would go out for drinks with him on occasion and that he was "a fine man." However, he was only dimly aware of the Baron's murky past, knowing only that a long time ago the Baron had indeed been in "some rock band." We were getting closer. Just as he went up the one road going from Armsdale to Broadford, our friend appeared out as if out of nowhere. We switched cars in the middle of the road—and soon we were off. I tried hurriedly to explain to this good Samaritan about

my friend easily defeated her single conservative opponent verbally.

I stayed out of it, just trying to figure out where we were sleeping, and managed to phone up an older man named Jim Fraser who would let us stay at his place. I was also very hungry, and being well-versed in the art of starving to death in America, had brought a large amount of stale—and now wet—bagels with me. When I hid in a corner and starting munching down on my bagels, a large man came up and angrily told me to put my bagels away. I soon figured out he was the owner of the hotel, and he was upset that I had violated the sanctity of his kitchen by bringing in stale bagels. I decided it was time to hit the road and find Fraser's crash pad. As I walked into the bar I heard a scream.

The large and drunken pro-war bastard had jumped on my friend! Normally, I somehow manage to cover my deep-seated insanity with a thin veneer of rationality, but a history of having my female friends victims of violence combined with my Southern heritage caused me to flip out. Using some of my knowledge of ju-jitsu, I quickly slid my arm around the larger and more physically imposing fat man's neck, and within a second had choked him. He fell down to his knees, and the rest of the



my plans to visit the lead singer of my favorite rock band and have him forge me a sword. She seemed mildly amused and, for fun, drove me down the road where his forge was. As it was getting dark, I only had the luck to glimpse the sign "Castlekeep: Medieval Swords and Celtic Jewelry" before we had to turn around and drive back. I was so close I could almost smell the Baron—a smell mixed of motorcycle oil and blood.

One thing every visitor to the Isle should know is that hitchhiking is a long and honored social tradition in Skye. We suspect this is because if you're driving in Skye during winter (as the tourists invade in summer—so be warned—this may only be seasonal!) and someone is hitchhiking, you probably know them. If you don't know them, they probably know your parents. As we were leaving the Cuillens, the breathtaking mountains on which the Baron makes in his home, a giant shadowy figure loomed out into the distance with a huge thumb pointed squarely in the air. We pulled over to pick him up, and after five minutes of conversation in thick Skyish he revealed that he indeed was the good friend of the father of our driver, and had known her as a wee baby!

Back at the house of our host, we cooked a large meal of eggs and spaghetti to feed her and her fellow housemates, and luckily I had brought a secret weapon in my front-pocket all the way from Edinburgh—a fiver's worth of weed. Yes, I realize the potential political and moral compromises of giving out weed as a way to help earn favors from complete strangers. Yes, I am a horrible example to future generations. However, when in Skye, do as the Skyians do—and in Skye weed is hard to get, since few enterprising drug dealers make the journey this far from civilization. Personally, I felt like I was Marco Polo exchanging noodles for fine spice. The weed was gladly accepted, and soon myself, my friend, and a bevy of sundry women working temp jobs in Skye were off to a pub to celebrate. The snow was falling a bit harder and the roads were icing, and after walking for ages a hotel, on some small island off of the coast of Skye, appeared from the mist.

Inside the hotel it was a different world. Like most of Skye, this hotel skirted the fine line between a capitalist enterprise and an anti-capitalist potluck. Sandwiches and beers were passed around with little regard as to whether anyone was paying. We were also, I might add, the only people in the pub. The waitress sat down and regaled us with tales of her adventures in the States and her great love of country music. She, a woman from a semi-rural island, had somehow traveled almost everywhere I, a semi-professional hobo, had over the last year. She even brought out her prized country boots from Nashville and placed them, without any regard for hygiene, on the kitchen table. A maid named Rock-around-the-clock Kate came in. A thoroughly ancient woman, at least eighty years old, she lived up to her nickname. She drank whisky dram after whisky dram, plotting her next journey to Amsterdam, and then began singing "Rock, Rock, Rock, around the clock..." It was going to be one of those nights, yet again.

The next morning I woke up with a severe headache. Stumbling down the stairs, I looked out the window... only to see a huge deluge of snow before me. The blizzard had struck. In fact, the blizzard had not just struck, but was *striking*. I was snowbound, in a

remote house full of people I barely knew, and my only friend, while being very polite about the mad premise of this trip, was doubting my logistical abilities. Soon, the entire house of girls was hovering around the television, and much to my horror and their delight, the newsperson announced that more or less everything was closed. I silently screamed—now I would never see the Baron. Gripped by terror, I ran out of the house into a good foot or two of snow, and up the hill. The roads were definitely all snowed in. In mindless fury, I hiked a few miles till I got to a major road that, while icy, seemed drivable. No cars in sight.

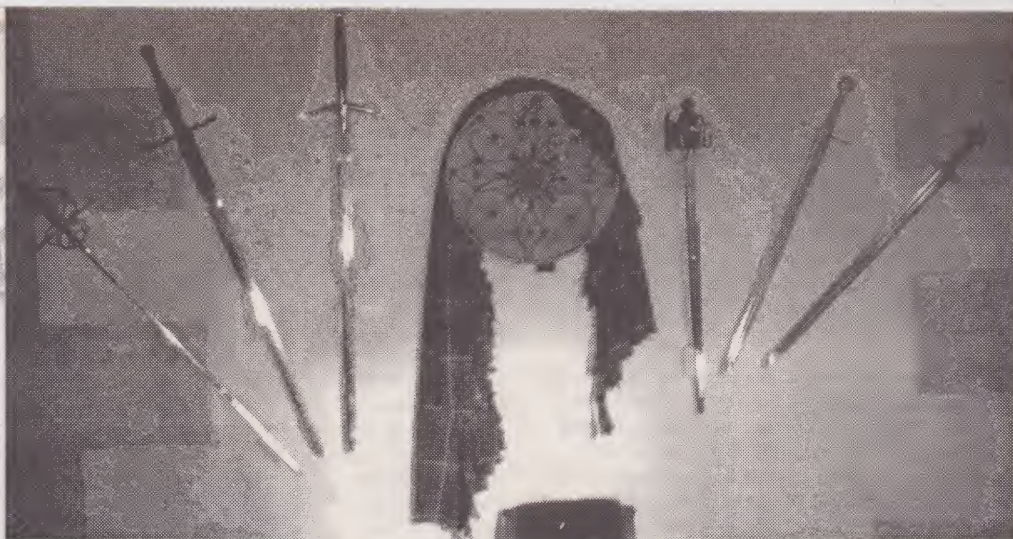
I shambled back to our snowbound house and then completed the

next part of my plan... I called the Baron. A voice answered, and it was not the Baron, but a man known only to me as Garth. He said that the Baron would usually be dropping his kids off for school at this point in the morning! However, given the huge snowstorm, school was cancelled—and he was going to be in the forge! If the Baron could brave this storm, so could I! When I told my friend this, she started to doubt my sanity openly. She noted that the last ferry back to the mainline left at five, and, as it was about noon, I would have no time to get back to the mainland if I hitchhiked out to see the Baron. While it was a good point, I have never let good points stop me before. I felt horribly guilty when I realized that we had to take separate paths, and she had to hitchhike by herself back to Armadale to catch the ferry—and hang out at the bar where I had strangled someone just a few nights ago! I wondered what the locals were going to do. Still, sometimes you either have to get on the road or go home with your tail between your legs. That means you have no choice but to hit the road.

So, there I was, with a giant backpack, a bag full of wet and now icy bagels, and a thumb. Since the road was covered with ice, no one was going to pick me up any time soon. I began walking. After about an hour and a half, I made it to the edge of a road that was dangerously icy, but not completely covered in snow. As the snow started pelting me harder, in the



THE BARON HIMSELF!



distance I heard the familiar sounds of... a car. Lo and behold, what was clearly an SUV pulled beside me. A pleasant-looking fellow, who was either an aging yuppie or a degenerate aristocrat, with an English accent (quite different than the variety of Scots/Gaelic accents everyone else so far had!) told me to hop on in. Soon, my savior and his wife, also an elegant English woman, were driving me straight to Broadford. I impressed them with my tales of being a lost American on Skye and my deep love of its natural beauty (all the time carefully disguising our clearly differing positions within the class struggle), and they chatted about photography, the coming war on Iraq, and Skye. Like any good bourgeois couple, they were not going to let a good foot or two of snow, nor icy roads, stop them from shopping, so they dropped me off in Broadford at the local grocery store. I began walking towards Elgol, and again put my thumb out. After a good half an hour of walking, an SUV again came roaring from behind me! My yuppie saviors had arrived yet again, and they pulled over! I must have made a good impression.

I told them about the Baron (not the singer-for-a-crust-punk-band part of his life, but the swordsmith part). They were immediately fascinated, having lived on this island for years and never heard of him. They were looking for a gift for some American cousins, and what better than hand-forged jewels! Now that I had enchanted my hosts, they speedily made it across death-defying mountain roads and suicidal sheep by means of their all-terrain vehicle. The mountains were getting higher, the snow was falling quicker, the sheep were multiplying, and the world was getting wilder. In these subtle changes, I detected the presence of the Baron. In the distance, I could spot the strange stone building on the mountainside that was Castlekeep, the forge of the Baron himself. We pulled over a precarious walled-in driveway, and, after clambering through the gate, I entered the Hall of the Baron himself.

Inside, it was a giant medieval hall, the kind that one would imagine Vikings drinking in after ruthlessly plundering a monastery and skewering its monks. Crossed swords hung over the rooms, and other medieval chain-mail and helmets hung about. I peered in, and then a long and haggard, yet strangely familiar face appeared from the darkness. The Baron.

The Baron looked a bit surprised that visitors had actually came in the middle of a blizzard. I don't know what I looked like, but I was definitely frozen and wild-eyed. He looked at me quizzically and asked

me if I "would like a cup of tea." In complete shock, and recovering from the cold, I agreed and sat down at nearest table. The Baron disappeared behind the door, and appeared carrying a large pot of tea with a multitude of cups and piles of sugar on a giant steel platter.

From inside, a stout man with a long beard, who resembled a Nordic warrior (or Gimli) strode in, and announced himself as "Garth." Garth immediately seized the yuppie couple who had just wandered in into his land of precious jewels.

First thing about the Baron is he looks like a man who has lived through hell and came back alive. He's got an incredibly tall, terrifyingly skinny frame and wears thin, black glasses. His hair is shaggy and wild, but the entire time I was with him he kept most of his mane beneath a small woolen cap. His smile is a bit craggy, and his manner very gentle. I have found through years of experience that people who have lived lives that are truly unimaginable, who have eaten shit and pissed their own blood, are not psychotic in their social relations, but instead incredibly soft-spoken, as if to make up for the rest of their existence. At first, I had no idea what to say. I didn't want to appear to be a crazed punk rock fan who had traveled halfway around the world to see him. I wasn't sure how seriously he took his life in punk rock now that he was a swordsmith, and if he had any idea that people had had their lives changed by his old band's music of despair. Did he know that we had sung "Arise" from the deepest, darkest pits of a Philadelphia jail, when we had little hope of being released? Did he know that while hopping trains in the bleakest colds of northern Canada, to keep our spirits warm we sang each other "The Darkest Hour" as we fell asleep, perhaps never to wake again? Could he understand that we had listened to "Chain Reaction" over and over again while driving through the mountains of Mexico to aid masked guerrillas? Could he imagine that we had stowed away in luxurious hotels, humming "Drink and Be Merry" all night, hoping for a free breakfast in the morning? Would he approve of us putting the Amebix on a mix tape with Lynyrd Skynyrd, since we did leave off "Sweet Home Alabama"? Could he possibly understand that as we had starved, stolen, fought cops, and drunk tear gas, *his band was the fucking soundtrack?* I had no idea what to say.

I decided to blow my cover as a Amebix-crazed anarchist punk. After all, I didn't have a single piercing and my circle-A tattoo was covered by my

clothing, so for all the Baron knew I wasn't even an Amebix fan, just a deranged sword-fan. The Baron knew me only as some weirdo who had sent him a few e-mails, and had on the side asked if he was the singer of Amebix.

"To be honest, Rob, I don't know much about swords. I definitely want a blade of some type, and I really don't even want it for myself as much I want it for some of my friends in the States who are having hard times right now. I didn't come to get the sword from you because you're the best swordsmith. I want you to forge a blade for myself and my friends because you were the singer for the Amebix and that music means a lot to us."

I didn't say we wanted the dagger to kill cops. Felt it might be impolite.

With the mention of the Amebix, the Baron's raven-like eyes lit up with a spark.

"Ahhh... yes, the Amebix. I always felt we broke up just as were on the verge of doing something great."

Well, I had broached the question. It was like going out with someone you had a crush on for years and then finally asking him or her if they liked you. *One thing I've always wondered about is if punk rock is relevant, ten years after your band—who lived out of dumpsters, starving, freezing, stealing, and playing some of the most heart-rending music ever made—breaks up, you have children, and start forging swords for a living. Does it still fucking matter anymore? Was it fucking worth it?*

The Baron's eyes were still alight. "Yes, yes, we were really about to do something great. We ran out of chords to play though. You know, it's all just A and E."

I had conjectured so myself. "You know, when we were playing, we weren't really all that good. It was like, hit the big string, now hit that string." With an almost apologetic attitude towards Amebix's musical prowess, he continued, "Well, the music just sort of happened, you know, from what we were living..." Yes, the music still mattered to the Baron. More importantly, he still saw some value in what he had done. It was in his eyes.

I started telling him about myself, about how people still listened to Amebix in the States, and how his music kept us alive during dark times. He nodded... but how did he get from Amebix to Skye?

"Yes, we all went our separate ways. You know, Spider's still the same as he was back then... living in squats, playing in bands. I didn't really know what to do with myself after the band broke up. I hadn't really thought about it that much, so I got on my motorcycle and wandered off across Europe. I did that for a while, and then got in an horrible accident, and I fucked my arm up so that I couldn't even ride my motorcycle. I didn't know what to do after that, but I had some folks in Skye so I went to live with them."

So the motorcycles stories were true. I also started telling him about my life, about how much anarchism meant to me, about how once I had spent all my time just listening to music about not bowing down to any gods or masters, and now I had spent the last few years living it. How his music helped me understand

the annihilation that is before us, that is with us, to come to terms with it and then fight to overcome it. We were reminiscing about our old friends, our lives, our adventures. In the meantime, the cups of tea seemed to last longer and longer, and the yuppies also sat down with their cup of tea. Having done their role in bringing me here, I thanked them profusely and continued telling stories of anarchy with the Baron. The yuppies, definitely realizing that their friendly hitchhiker had a secret identity as a raving mad anarchist, and this friendly swordsmith secretly had an identity of a rock star, decided not to reject this strange meeting of worlds but merely continue upon their own, and after their cup of tea, returned to inspecting the jewelry without a bat of their eyes.

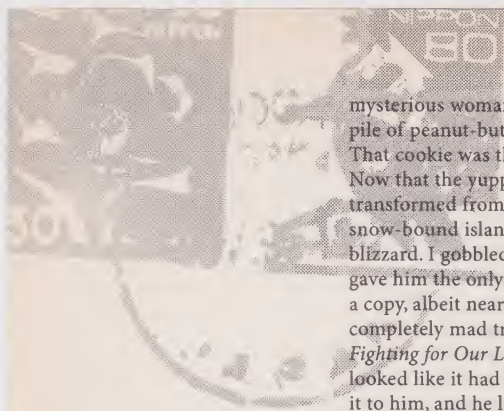
Of course, this still left unanswered the question of how one transforms one's life, how one metamorphoses from being the Baron to Rob Miller the Swordsmith. I mean, it's not exactly what most people would call a normal career path; your high school career counselor couldn't give you any advice on it.

"I worked a whole lots of crappy jobs, you know, mostly in bars and hotels. One day I wanted a sword. So I asked my friends where to get one. And then, no one knew where to get a sword at... because no one actually made them anymore. So, I decided I might as well make them, as I was interested in swords. But there was no one to teach me, so I kept working these jobs in hotels, and by night I taught myself how to make swords. I just got the books and read them, and got the equipment slowly, and starting making swords. For years I just would sell them by the side of road with a sign. Never made much money out of it, to be honest. Then one day my Garth here told me about this house he wanted to get, and set up his shop in, and he asked me to join him. So, I did."

Yes, it's true. The Baron taught himself how to forge swords, all by his fucking self. Do-it-yourself sword-forging! Not only that, but his passion for forging blades was like a fire that must have been kindled out of the ashes of Amebix, because he's damn good at it. World-class. The only swordsmith in Scotland, he makes his blades without modern technology, using ancient and rekindled techniques. His eyes lit up with same intensity when he talked about swords as they did when he was reminiscing about the Amebix or his motorcycle.

The Baron does not make mock swords, he makes real swords. Fully forged blades that no one can match. These swords are huge, giant steel affairs capable of killing men in a single blow. I know it sounds like I'm kidding—I'm not. It's just amazing. He taught himself an entire art, and it's almost proof that if you really struggle, if you have nothing left at all, if even your motorcycle's gone and you can only study overdue library books by candlelight in a squat on a remote island, you can learn to do anything. The Baron is living proof. He can do anything with a sword, a knife, a dagger... anything. Just ask him.

Soon, I realized my time was up... I had only an hour and a half till the ferry left for Armadale, and if I didn't get there in time I would be stranded on Skye in the snow, with nowhere really to stay. I mean, by this time I had sort of burnt out my welcome in the few places that had let me in with my mania. As I mentioned to the Baron that I had to go, he smiled and offered me a peanut-butter cookie. Another



mysterious woman appeared out of nowhere, and a pile of peanut-butter cookies manifested themselves. That cookie was the only thing I had to eat all day. Now that the yuppies had left, the hall of Castlekeep transformed from shop into a feast hall, a merry snow-bound island of humanity in the middle of a blizzard. I gobbled the cookie down and in thanks gave him the only thing I had as a gift for him. It was a copy, albeit nearly destroyed by the waves of Ewan's completely mad trip across to Skye from Mallaig, of *Fighting for Our Lives* that, like the Baron himself, looked like it had been through hell and back. I gave it to him, and he looked through it with a smile, promising to read it. He seemed a bit worried for me, although he noted with humor the facts that I was clearly losing my sanity and my friend was waiting for me at a bar where I had choked a man two nights before. After a quick tour of the Baron's forge, which looked like a truly mad collection of weird metal scraps and half-created blades, we shook hands, and I walked back into the snow, thumb in air.

It's damn refreshing to meet someone like the Baron. He gives me hope. After all these years, all these opportunities for cynicism, opportunities for selling out to capitalist values, for drinking himself to death, for just giving up the fight, he's still there, still staying true. Sure, he's not vegan or a political activist. However, life's not about lifestyle choices, record collections, political victories, or any of that. It's about staying true to what you love, living a life you can love. Even when the entire world looks at you and says you're completely off your fucking rocker, even when they try to prove it to you by making you work horrible jobs, starving you if you quit those horrible jobs, trying to make you believe in anything but yourself, giving you a million options of consumption, narcosis, and—most of all—submission... even after all of the shit you have to live through every day just to survive, you can still stand there, alive and defiant. Staying true to your feelings, to your life story, to your past, your friends, the mountains, and yourself—that's staying true in a more powerful sense than anything I've ever heard on any second rate punk record. It would have been deeply disappointing if the Baron had really given up on it all, had given up on his music and his words, if he had thought it was all just youthful indiscretion or a complete waste of time, if he had become just another cynical swordsmith. He didn't. You could tell by the look in his eyes. He still loved the Amebix, motorcycles, and all of it, the starvation, the freezing, the anarchy—it was all worth it. And now he was doing something that was on some level just as crazy as being in the Amebix: forging swords on a remote island, surrounded by friends and giant snow-covered mountains. Yes, it's a small business, but the Baron isn't making swords to make money. He's making swords because he fucking loves to make swords. Remember, he taught himself to make swords for no other reason than he wanted to, than he could. The Baron is staying true.

Yes, there's hope. Yes, it's all worth it, every last moment. As for where we all will eventually end up, well, one can never know. As for the Baron, we can only aspire to such a fate.

I never directly asked him if his swords could kill cops. However, I did tell him that we might need them to be very sharp, and that we wanted to really use them, and that we were anarchists. The Baron

smiled, and he answered all my questions, including some I never asked him.

And now the road goes on forever... and the sun will always shine... one day we'll be together... when we cross the final line... if I turn to you... when all is said and done, will you meet me on the other side, seven million miles beyond the sun.

—The Amebix

la luz, tx

THE US/MEXICO BORDER FROM BOTH SIDES

by Gloria Cubana

I felt underdressed as soon as I saw Flaco. I was suddenly very out of place in my casual clothing as he strode out of the house in a cowboy shirt and tight jeans accented by a wide leather belt with a large buckle. I listened as he persuaded his father to let him wear his cowboy boots, and they hopped around in the dust of the yard as they traded shoes.

We rode to the *jaripeo* in the back of the pickup, bouncing out of Crespo (pop. 2000) on the main road. Carolina, Miguel, and Blanca all wore *charro* outfits, too, and my sister and I hunkered down in the bed of the truck and listened to them talking animatedly. On our way through Celaya, we passed some boys hitchhiking by the side of the road who turned out to be cousins, and they all jumped in the back of the truck, too, perching on the sides as we barreled down the road toward La Luz, TX.

La Luz, TX, is about 4 hours northwest of Mexico City, in Guanajuato state. Not, that is to say, in Texas. The humble town of La Luz became a boom town when many of its male inhabitants left for the United States in search of better employment opportunities, and mailed money home for their families and to build houses there. Because of the way Mexican immigrants rely on a network of already-immigrated relatives and friends when they begin their new lives in the US, they tend to stay in the already established communities that have grown up there. Most of the residents of La Luz had ended up in Texas, so they'd renamed the town. We joked that Crespo, which is at an earlier stage in that economic upswing—it's still a town under construction, many of the houses being expanded and remodeled with money from the US, while La Luz has settled down more—should be called Crespo, NC.

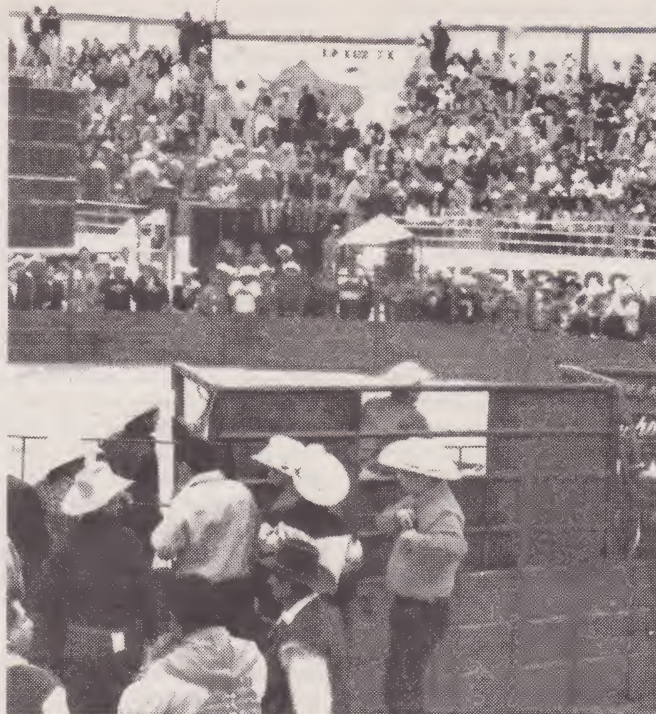
A *jaripeo* is a bull-riding contest, and the parking lot outside the *plaza de toros* was filled with hundreds of vehicles, many of them American ones probably belonging to Mexicans working in the US who had come home for the holidays. I didn't spot any Texan plates (the name may be more whimsical than factual at this point), but I did pause to feel sorry for the man from this dry place, hot even in late December, who ended up living in Minnesota.

The inside of the plaza was even more crowded than the parking lot. It was packed to a degree that would certainly violate the most generous of American fire codes. There was a dirt floor down below beside the

ring where people stood to watch the bull riding, and a spread of concrete bleachers up above for the faint at heart. I ended up sitting on one of the concrete terraces next to a man who told me that he had lived in Raleigh, NC—about 60 miles from my home—for two years. When I asked him if he had enjoyed living in the US, he said, "Well, my life there was working, and my life here is living." Talking with this *ranchero*

from a rural Mexican community who had lived for two years in a foreign country made me think about how limited the American perception of the Latin American immigrant experience can be. Since immigrants to the US frequently have little formal education and are from poor families, we tend to think of them as having little experience or understanding of the world, when they have often seen more of the world than the average American.

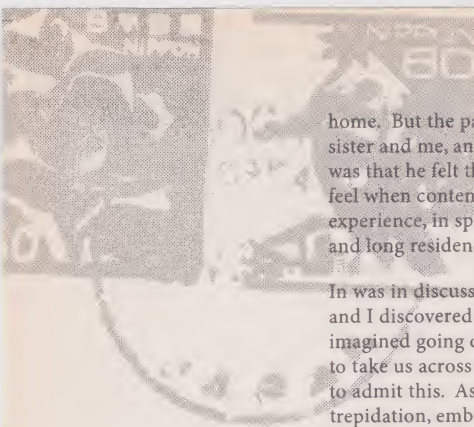
We associate a person's socioeconomic status with a particular level of travel, and the immigrant confounds those assumptions. It does not occur to us that immigrants have crossed thousands of miles of distance to work in the United States; that they may have lived in several American cities, from Los Angeles, CA to Yadkinville, NC; that they may follow seasonal agricultural work or construction jobs all around the country. This very un-American disjunction between class and travel is strange to us, as travel for most of us is a leisure activity, something done as a vacation from work, not to find it in the first place. My sister found herself struggling to reconcile these two approaches to travel when she and Flaco's older brother, José, decided to travel together. She was convinced that José, who has lived in the United States for 13 years, would be transformed if he had the opportunity to travel the way she is used to—the way she had found her own life transformed. Is it just from the vantage point of bourgeois privilege that we can believe that staying in a hotel in a foreign country might be a life-changing experience? Or was my sister right to think that José had missed out on some vital element that is deeply a part of her kind of traveling? Is our tourist-style travel a diet version of the cultural immersion that immigrants experience? And to what degree are Mexican immigrants, who tend to remain within established and tightly knit immigrant communities, actually immersed?



While the immigrant communities themselves are embedded in the larger culture, and inevitably interact with its cultural and social currents, the individual members of the communities frequently remain isolated to varying degrees. José lived in Los Angeles for 8 years and learned barely any English. It was only after coming to North Carolina,

which lacks (although increasingly less so) that well-established, intricate network of resources and employment for Hispanics, that he began to learn the language. In addition, the focus of many of these immigrants on work to the exclusion of all other things—as I heard from my neighbor at the *jaripeo*—limits their ability to explore the culture that they have entered. It's much more important to earn money to send back to the place that you consider your home than it is to try to make a home of what is basically, well, a very extended stay in a foreign hotel. So my sister may be on to something when she insists that José's world would open up if he got to see more of the world, because it's not the "more" she's focusing on, it's the seeing.

José, on the other hand, was frightened by the idea of a trip of that sort, which my sister and I found incomprehensible. This man had crossed the US-Mexican border illegally several times, crawling dehydrated through stretches of desert and nearly freezing at night, moving with the pressures of poverty behind him and of the INS patrols all around him. How could he be afraid to do the comparatively undemanding (and completely legal) wandering that we were used to? Part of it seemed to come from a sense of guilt, from a feeling that, however much he might want to do it, that sort of travel was something that rich people did, and that his was not the sort of life in which that sort of travel belonged. He was only tangled in that internal struggle because of encountering my sister's and my privileged expectations about what the world might offer *our* sort of life. Traveling, for him, meant being irresponsible to his family and to himself. Also, he was intimidated by the idea of traveling in Latin America (which we found surprising, having assumed he'd be more comfortable there). He was anxious about finding himself out of place in a part of the world where he presumably should feel relatively at



home. But the part of his fear that fascinated my sister and me, and the part we found most startling, was that he felt the same kind of anxiety that people feel when contemplating their first major travel experience, in spite of his frequent border crossings and long residence in a foreign country.

In was in discussing our incredulity that my sister and I discovered that we had both independently imagined going down to Mexico and hiring a *coyote*¹ to take us across the border. It sounds ridiculous to admit this. As José was considering, with some trepidation, embarking on the kind of trip that for him was a shirking of major responsibilities to his family and to his own sense of self, my sister and I were contemplating making adjustments to our own style of travel, wondering if it would be possible to buy ourselves an illegal border crossing, like a more dramatic safari. Were we just fantasizing about being Extreme Tourists, about taking our travels one crazy step farther than most people dared—and if the *coyote* abandoned us in the desert¹, that would be the ultimate travel adventure, right? I'd rather think it came from somewhere sincere, not from an overdeveloped sense of backpacker one-upmanship, and I don't think I'm just deluding myself in believing that. It came from a real desire to understand what it must be like for someone to make that dangerous trip, even knowing that we could never hope to actually replicate the experience of someone crossing into the US illegally. Even if a *coyote* could be persuaded to take us across, the dangers would be mostly absent. We would have none of the driving motivations, and if the border patrols were to pick us up, we'd be sternly and thoroughly questioned, and perhaps fined, but our passports would probably protect us from any greater punishment. We would not feel the pressure to make the journey wearing high heels, or with far too little protection from the sun, so as not to look too suspiciously prepared to cross.

Still, we could certainly be accused, if not of any actual crime, of exoticizing illegal immigration, of reimagining the desperation and bravery of those who make the dangerous crossing as a sort of dashing adventurousness. In some sense, though, that silly desire was a variation on our standard approach to travel, a way to bridge cultural gaps, a way to expose ourselves to an entirely different life experience. The closest we had so far been able to get to immigration, and to its effects on the social landscape of Mexico, was on buses crossing the Mexican countryside, listening to itinerant musicians in the aisles playing Los Tigres del Norte songs about immigration to the US, amazed that there is an entire subgenre of songs dedicated to the phenomenon. With a *coyote* at our sides, as long as he remained there and didn't fade into the desert with vague instructions to head toward a distant highway, we might be able to get a bit closer: not all the way, of course, in the same way that people who follow pilgrim trails as a travel experience cannot hope to replicate all the fervor and spiritual intensity of a pilgrimage, but closer. We both realize, however, that this is one gap all our earnest wishing will not close.

It's easy to dismiss our style of travel as a mere dabbling in culture, a poor substitute for the real cultural immersion that an immigrant faces, but that's not necessarily a useful way to look at it. It's true that often, since they live abroad for so long, even though they intend one day to return, Mexican immigrants to the United States don't feel quite at home again in Mexico. They find themselves caught between the assumptions of the two cultures, and never manage to reconcile them. In the best of circumstances, where they still feel strong ties to Mexico, and plan to live there in the future, they remain unable to make a living in the place that they consider their home, estranged from their own culture by economic circumstances. Mexican women have told us that many women go with their husbands when they cross the border to look for employment, but then never come back, even when their husbands do, since the strictures on gender tend to be less intense in the US. (The prevalence of domestic violence in rural Mexico feeds into this dynamic.) Our museum-heavy jaunts through foreign places rarely expose us to that kind of cultural dissonance. But it was our kind of traveling, the bourgeois, boring kind, that led us to La Luz, TX, where a quick game of count-the-gringos in the crowd came up with us and one other man next to the bullpen.

Both my sister and I had our worlds broken apart and glued back together in a larger and more wondrous form when we did our first bits of middle class tourism. It became a world in which the man sitting next to me in a crowded *plaza de toros* might also have been a neighbor in a world a couple thousand miles away. It became a world in which the economic conditions of a small town in rural Mexico can be both a trigger for and a reflection of social and cultural changes in my own country. It became a world in which I and a man from that Mexican village could have different ways of traveling, and share them with each other. It's unlikely that I'll ever be forced to look for jobs in another country because the only ones available to me in my own can't provide enough money to live on, and José will never feel like two years of his life would be well-spent being a dilettante abroad. Nevertheless, it's not enough to say that our ways of moving through the world complement each other, or even that either way is valid: it's important for me to be aware of the cultural dynamics that foster that difference. It will be as good for me to understand the kind of privilege I enjoy as it may be for José, who flew to Brazil last week, to feel free to lie on the beach in a foreign country, instead of propping up its economy with his labor. This shouldn't mean that I have to renounce all the advantages given to me by this privilege, though, so if anyone knows a good *coyote*...²

¹ A *coyote* is an immigrant smuggler; people pay them thousands of dollars to lead them safely over the border into the United States. Leading them safely can apparently be too much of a pain in the ass, however, and some coyotes have abandoned their charges, leaving them to wander around the desert alone, sometimes many miles from civilization. Thousands of immigrants have died in the past ten years while attempting to enter the country, many of them because of negligent traffickers.

² Relax, you idiots, she's joking.

africa, india, pakistan

GREATEST HITS, 96-01

supplied by Volvo, CrimethInc. Travel Agency

I'm the first one to admit that adventure can be found right around the corner. However, if you're somewhat fortunate, and can manage to save up some money for an airline ticket, I recommend you go beyond your known horizon, because there is a world to discover. Travels in far off countries can prove to be nasty, brutish and short, but also mind-bending and truly exhilarating. I've picked my brain for some stories that I hope could serve as an inspiration...

1. HITCHHIKING ACROSS THE SAHARA DESERT

"You can't go there, there are no roads..."

- My local travel agency

THROUGH OCCUPIED TERRITORY

I boarded a bus in the town of Laayoune, where I'd spent a night, and was just as happy to see some familiar faces on the bus as I was to leave this dusty godforsaken town-turned-military-outpost behind. Laayoune is the heart of the Moroccan annexation of what was formerly known, and is still recognized by the U.N., as Western Sahara.

When Spain evacuated the phosphate-rich region of Western Sahara, which they called Spanish Sahara, in 1975, partly because of harassment from the Polisario, a rebel group fighting for national liberation, both Morocco and Mauritania raised claims to the sparsely populated desert territory. Mauritania dropped its claim in 1979, after the Polisario had crippled their economy for several years, in exchange for Morocco renouncing any historical right to, and dropping plans to absorb, Mauritania. In November 1975, King Hassan II orchestrated the infamous Green March: about 350,000 Moroccans, mostly civilians, marched into the territory to stake out their "historical" right. In the late sixties it had become clear that the native inhabitants, the Saharavis, wanted independence. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia al-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario) embarked on a long guerrilla war against the new Moroccan overlords. Polisario scored occasional successes against their far superior enemy but as they lost Libyan and Algerian backing and the Moroccans erected a 1600km-long sand wall to hamper their movement, it became clear that they were losing the battle. The U.N. brokered a ceasefire in 1991, under the understanding that a referendum would be held to settle the issue one and for all. The ceasefire has largely been holding up but the referendum keeps getting postponed and has yet to materialize. The referendum has been postponed due to bitter disagreement of who would be eligible to vote. The Polisario, rightfully, wants only those registered as citizens before the Green March allowed participating, but Morocco naturally wants to include many of the region's new inhabitants. A lot of these inhabitants have been enticed to move into the area with the help of tax-relief and prospects of employment. Morocco has also strengthened its hold on the territory since the ceasefire, by investing in infrastructure and expanding the city of Laayoune.

A lot of these improvements have to do with the fact that they need it to support their mining and military activities as well as to accommodate new settlers. Recently the U.N. made clear that they support a "frame-work agreement" with a limited autonomy for Western Sahara within the state of Morocco. This proposition is not only a concession to Morocco and a slap in the face to the 165,000 Saharavis living in refugee camps in Southern Algeria. To add insult to injury the camps are also having their food supply slowly cut off, most probably to make them more prone to swallow any deal. However, the Polisario is not accepting the agreement—but the chance that they will get the territory, which according to a ruling of the International Court in Haag 1975 belongs to them, looks small at the moment.

Seated on the bus with big smiles plastered over their faces were two other travelers I bonded with in the Moroccan capital of Rabat while we were all trying our best to acquire the visa for Mauritania. This tedious process ended up involving fake airline tickets, exchanging currency on the black market, and a bit of legwork, but finally we had it within our grasp and passport covers.

Local custom dictates that you offer food you devour while traveling to the surrounding passengers, and in exchange for a banana passed back an aisle in the bus I struck up a brief friendship with a man on his way to visit relatives. At a brief stop the man, and his traveling company, treated me to the traditional tea ceremony, involving three progressively stronger and sweeter cups of tea, while I was trying to sit cross-legged on a carpet on the floor. Most of the other people in the room were sitting by the tables on the chairs provided, and I figured that my newfound friends who preferred the carpets on the floor were Saharavis, so I brought up the subject of Polisario and was hastily quietened down under the pretext that the "walls have ears" and "the only free debate takes place on the internet."

We arrived in Dakhla a couple days before the next convoy was due to leave for Mauritania, and tried to find a suitable ride. After registering with the army, which leads the bi-weekly convoy to the Mauritanian border, we managed to secure a ride with two French guys in their cars. They had done the trip a couple of times before, every time bringing cars with them which they sold once they got them through the desert and arrived in the capital of Mauritania, Nouakchott. At first they were reluctant to bring us along, due to the extra weight—but on the other hand, we would be more people around to help with the digging and pushing once the cars got stuck. The convoy consisted of Mauritanian traders in over-packed jeeps, some other travelers in beat up vehicles, nicely robed men with turbans in shiny BMWs, and an English guy on motorcycle.

IN THE HANDS OF THE REAPER

The convoy left Dakhla in the afternoon, and as the car I was riding in overtook all other vehicles at a neck-breaking speed it slowly dawned on me that my benefactor at the wheel, Richard, was more than a little crazy. We later dubbed him Minus and his more rational counterpart Olivie, Plus, because Minus sometimes drove the car into pieces before reaching the destination, quite purposefully, and lost all his money on the trip. This time he didn't have



OUR GUIDE KHALITA, AND PART OF OUR LITTLE CONVOY ACROSS THE SAHARA

any to start with either so Plus had put down the money for both cars and hired him on as a driver for one of them. This seemed like the worst possible set-up so naturally I asked Plus why he would chose Minus over any other sane person to do the job—to which he replied something to the effect that "it makes it more interesting." While most other people eased along trying to minimize the impact of the road, which gradually deteriorated, we were way up ahead flying past camels and the odd sand dune. Minus's English wasn't top notch, but he was eager to learn; so while we were pressed to our seats, flying over "roads" one wouldn't be able to bike on, he popped a tape into the stereo. We were shooting like projectile through the desert into the unknown adventure, and "Bombtrack" by Rage Against the Machine came blasting out of the stereo, which made me feel so intensely alive that I got goose bumps and screamed at the top of my lungs. Minus, the driver, on the other hand, let go of the steering wheel and fished out a handwritten note with the lyrics and started following along and make out the words, asking questions about some of them and generally not keeping his eyes at the road at all, which pushed another couple of ounces of adrenalin into my bloodstream. This became a common occurrence...

At nightfall, we arrived at the end of the road, literally, where the last Moroccan army post is, and camped there. In the morning we were waved off into the desert, which in that area is filled with landmines. We crossed our fingers, cranked up the stereo, and stuck to visible tracks and the odd pieces of dirt road here and there. The traders and their jeeps defected from the herd well before the first Mauritanian border post, in order to avoid taxes and scrutinizing eyes. We in our trusty, dusty old Mercedes hit the border first and were greeted by camouflaged soldiers, who crawled out from a dilapidated shelter.

I ponder their situation being posted out here, fully exposed to the merciless sun, landmines, heat, the constant blowing of sand. When we were filling in our personal data in a big ledger I noticed that one young soldier's shirt, sticking up from under his uniform, sported a collar embroidered "Tupac." He might be dead, but he is still everywhere in Africa—although few people seemed to know that he was a musician, let alone dead.

We tried to get airborne on a sand ledge, which was blocking our path, and stopped further down to see how they others were making it over. The English guy on the dirt bike got some air, but his front wheel sank deep when he landed—he ate shit and got his bike over him as a dessert. We ran back to aid him—and while lying motionless in the sand, his face white as a sheet, he gave us his diagnosis: the femur broken in two places. This was corroborated later. We pooled our skills and tranquilizers, and managed to put the leg in a splint. He was then put in the back of the fastest jeep, and sent ahead with a soldier to speed up the process at the different checkpoints. Considering that he'd nearly fainted from excruciating pains when he was lifted with utmost care, nobody envied his position in the back of that jeep, bouncing for hours through desert before they reached a hospital—if there was one. We later heard through the grapevine that by some incredible luck he was taken in and operated on by a hospital attached to a foreign mining company—he survived.

After a number of irritating and seemingly unnecessary checkpoints, we finally arrived in the first town in Mauritania, Noadhibou. The fun doesn't stop here though, because after all, you are in Mauritania, and there is no road or reliable tracks that lead through the desert to the capital, Nouakchott.

THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

Mauritania gained independence and started to build their capital, Nouakchott, in 1960. This Islamic republic, ruled by former nomads or their descendants, has since been ripe with military coups and racial tension. In the late 1960's, 83% of the population was still nomads, but desertification and persistent droughts have only spared the 10% that is still officially nomadic. Today, the country is a complete desert and only 1% of its area is fertile enough to sustain crops. This infertility of the landscape might be a plausible explanation for the female beauty standard of the Bidan caste of the Moors, which is to be plum and fat. Supposedly, some of them even feed their daughters a special diet of milk and peanuts so that they will grow up to be desirably colossal. Some members from a differing and lower caste, like the Haratin Moors, are probably happy if they get fed at all—because they might be slaves. In 1980 Mauritania declared slavery illegal, as the last country in the world, and it's estimated that there were an about 100,000 Haratin slaves within the country's borders at the time. To declare it illegal doesn't equal the eradication of the practice, and a lot of slaves didn't really have any options. Therefore it might not be all hearsay when some sources report that people are occasionally still bought and sold in the Adrar area, northeast of Nouakchott.

After checking in at a primitive hotel, our French drivers sought out a reliable guide, and we scraped together a raggedy lot of people and cars to share the cost. A guide is a must-have unless you desire to turn into toast somewhere in the desert after getting lost or breaking down, something that happens all the time. His name was Khalifa, he looked like a character out of a fairytale, and he was well versed in navigating the stretch from being an old guide for the camel caravans that used to cross the vast plains before some of the trafficking was taken over by trucks. He didn't speak anything besides the local dialect of Arabic, Hassaniya, but communicated with

signs as he was riding shotgun and leading the way with his hands. At tricky passages he walked in front of our small caravan and checked after strands of firm sand. With my limited knowledge of Arabic I later managed to find out that he had 37 camels out there somewhere (he pointed to the horizon), which made him a very wealthy man in this neck of the woods. Our little caravan consisted of the Frenchmen and their two cars, two Germans in a minivan, and three Spaniards with one car each. After stocking up on water and food—mostly that French type of bread that goes rock hard in fifteen minutes—we left town in the afternoon. We managed to squeeze through the military checkpoint without parting with any of our money, and, after picking up a hitchhiking local couple, we were off.

DESERT WITH MIRAGES

I had imagined the Sahara desert to be one picturesque sand dune after another, but it was actually a very varied landscape with everything from enormous plains made up of sand or little rocks to what looked like a savannah. The common denominator, though, was the constant maelstrom of sand that traveled with the winds over the infertile surface. A thin film of sand covers and permeates everything; after a while we had more sand in our eyes, food, cameras, sleeping bags, and cars than you can find in any urban playground sandpit. The first day passed in a joyful bliss and even the digging and pushing of the vehicles that got stuck was a novel experience. When the daylight disappeared we camped in the shelter of a croissant-shaped sand dune. The local people slept on the ground wrapped in their roomy attire and I got down into my sleeping bag. The weather during the day wasn't unbearably hot, thanks to the breeze from the nearby ocean, but at night it got pretty cold. I woke up almost covered in sand that settled on me during the night, had some sandy bread with sandy water, and we were off again. We continued to traverse the landscape; most of the other cars kept getting stuck, due to poor drivers'



A MINE WARNING SIGN SOMEWHERE ON THE BORDER BETWEEN MOROCCO/WEST SAHARA
MEDITERRANEAN



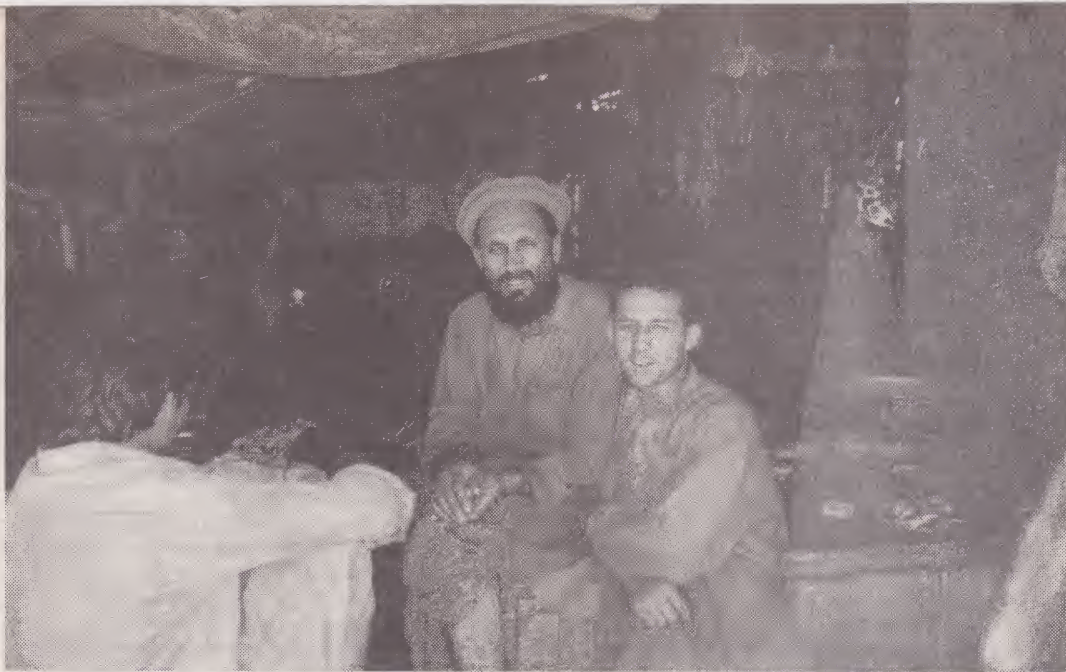
ONE OF THE ZILLION TIMES WE HAD TO BAIL THE CAR OUT

skills or weak engines, while our cars were doing circles around them. We also chased the odd camel at the horizon and did some roof-top surfing to pass the time. It was an amazing feeling to hang on to the sunroof while Minus was trying to set new speeding records on the vast sand plains. We took a little detour, although we had no way of telling, to drop our hitchhikers off at a Bedouin camp in the middle of nowhere. A beat up Landrover in their camp was the demarcation between this century and the last one and as we entered one of the tents, a sight greeted me that to this day I have tattooed in my retina. In the middle of the tent, cross-legged on a big carpet, sat an old man with a huge white beard and turban in front of an enormous and very old looking holy Koran. He also had his eyes generously encircled with blue eyeliner, which would have produced laughter in any other situation, except for this one: being face to face with an infamous Tuareg. The Tuaregs are historically known for being fierce warriors and skilled traders or raiders, though robbery was considered an honorable occupation. However, they were more or less forced to abolish their old lifestyle when the French put an end to nomadic movement and abolished slavery. Most of them turned to herding and had to leave the desert in search for greener pastures; but some of them still follow their traditional nomadic lifestyle. They are easily recognizable, due to their fair skin and indigo-blue robes or shawls wrapped around their heads to protect them from the elements. We were offered diluted camels' milk prepared by the women, and before we left we reciprocated their hospitality by exchanging some of our bread for ancient arrowheads, remnants from early human habitations that came to an end when the desert started spreading about 10,000 years ago.

UNDER A SHELTERING SKY

We had expected to arrive the same night, but some of the cars started to give trouble—and the very same cars, more than often the Spanish driven ones, repeatedly got stuck. As the day progressed, joyous acclamations turned into curses, loose objects into car parts, and bushes at the horizon into houses with attached swimming pools. The guide Khalifa got

more and more opportunities to kneel towards Mecca and brew tea in his little teapot. We on the other hand were digging, cursing, and pushing the cars, which returned the favor by wasting our drinking water with their coolers. Minus wrecked the whole steering apparatus in our car by hitting some big rocks in a restless stupor, which disabled us to the extent that we could only turn left. We were literally driving in circles before the problem got fixed with some rope and a chain. The good mood was gone and so was our food. We seriously, and deliriously, thought about leaving the two most faltering, haltering Spanish cars behind, with or without their drivers. The night was getting closer and we had to change our plans and head for a little fishing community by the ocean. We towed the two Spanish cars and arrived half-starved in the little village before nightfall, where we took a well deserved bath in the ocean and went hunting for food. The only available meal around the huts was some meat-based dish so I retracted into the car with some canned vegetables and some bread that I managed to acquire. The next day I was happy to leave because the little village had an eerie feeling to it and the villagers were doing their best to exploit our precarious conditions to extract as much money as possible from us. We had to leave the two cars behind because towing wasn't an option anymore, due to deeper sand and the extra stress on the leading vehicle. Several times during the day we had to cross over some real dunes; at first glance this looked impossible, but we pulled through. In the afternoon we reached the last stretch before the capital, which you drive on the beach at low tide. We reached some amazing speeds on the hard-packed sand, while dodging jackals and stranded boats. At one point I remember that the three Spanish men, packed into their last car, overtook us and I egged on Minus to retain the pole position. He replied that he paced himself because "behind one of these corners there are rocks which you can't see on beforehand" with that priceless French accent, while he stepped on it and brought the trophy home. Minutes later we turned a corner at full speed only to be met by huge rocks all over the beach, and I screamed as we were launched off a big one. I swear that we got fully



A BUTCHER AT THE SMUGGLER'S BAZAAR IN PESHAWAR

airborne before we crashed with a thunderous noise right off the shoreline, water splashing everywhere. While I did a check of all my limbs, the others in our caravan turned up and were flabbergasted. Miraculously, we could continue driving as soon as we backed out of the water. We arrived in the capital, Nouakchott, where the roads to the rest of sub-Saharan start, at nightfall. I took some time regaining my strength and sanity before I continued my adventure, with my traveling partners, on public transportation—but that is another story...

Recommended reading:

The Sheltering Sky, Paul Bowles

(A beautiful novel concerning love, hardship, and

traveling in the desert)

The Nomad or The Vagabond, Isabelle Eberhardt
(Amazing writing from this female vagabond who traveled the area disguised as a man)

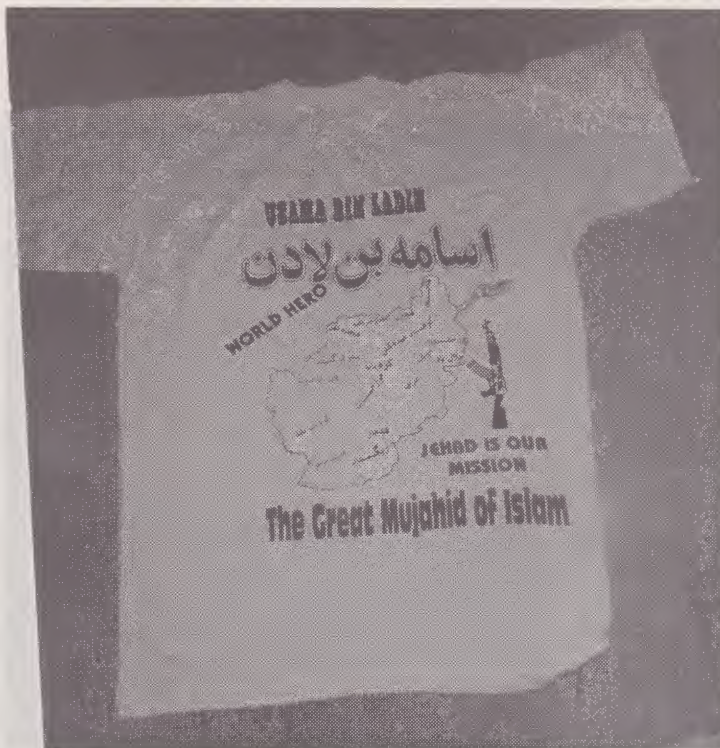
... and anything on the conflict in Western Sahara.

2. A BRIEF SCENE REPORT – PESHAWAR

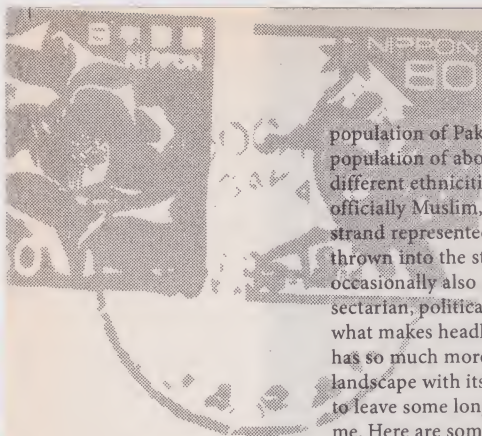
"Power springs from the barrel of a gun." –George W. Bush

"Ladies and gentlemen, Inshallah (God willing), we shall soon be landing in Lahore," announces the authoritative voice loud enough for me to wake up

and ponder my destiny, now apparently in the hands of God. Slumped in a seat onboard a plane belonging to Pakistan International Airways, which has the dubious task of flying very used equipment around the world's most hostile aviation environment, I find I'm kind of nervous, being not only an infidel but also an atheist. Seemingly safe on the ground, I greet this magnificent country while exiting the terminal as the warm weather embraces me to a backdrop of the commotion you'll find in any travelers' hub in this part of the world. Pakistan has had a rich and sometimes turbulent history that would be just as hard to condense as it would be boring to read. The teeming



LOCAL MERCHANDISE IN PESHAWAR



population of Pakistan is as diverse as it is large. Its population of about 130 million is made up of several different ethnicities, and the while the country is officially Muslim, with both the Sunni and Shiite strand represented, there are people of most religions thrown into the stew. The pot is not only melting but occasionally also exploding as well, in outbursts of sectarian, political and social violence. Even if this is what makes headlines around the world, the country has so much more to offer—and the mind-bending landscape with its deeply hospitable people is bound to leave some long lasting impressions, as it did upon me. Here are some of them...

POLITICS ON THE BORDER TO THEATRE

On my first day in the country I traveled to the border between Pakistan and its neighbor India, some twenty minutes west of Lahore. I went to witness the daily ceremony surrounding the closing of the only open land crossing between the two enemies. India and Pakistan are arch-rivals and try to outdo each other in everything from cricket to a nuclear arms race, and the spectacle at the border was no exception. After paying the 4-cent entrance fee we hurried over to what looked like a construction site, which I realized would serve as a grandstand. The Indians already had one, which was now filled to the brim, while we on the Pakistani side had to stand on the ground. We lined up beside the road that led through the border gates, with women and men on separate sides. I barely had time to study the soldiers, displaying their best, although worn out, uniforms before the ceremony began. Suddenly the soldiers from both countries started screaming while they performed a well synchronized ritual which eventually led to them hauling the flag. One by one they stormed forward towards the iron gate with a stride reminding me of Charlie Chaplin's impersonation of Hitler. The arms were pendulating all the way around the shoulders and the legs were lifted so high that their noses seemed to be in danger. But it wasn't the nose that was at stake, but

the country's honor, so every move was made with both grave seriousness and precision, all while the audience applauded their respective side and its maneuvers. I had to bite my tongue in order not to burst out laughing while every soldier marched forward and performed his patriotic duty. Every soldier slammed his feet down really hard, which looked painful, in order to create a noise that he complemented with shouts and loud theatrical sniffs, directed at the infidels on the other side. The Indian soldiers at the other side did likewise and they even had a big sign directed towards Pakistan saying "India - The largest democracy in the world." A not so subtle jab at Pakistan who has had more dictators than elections lately. After the flag was hauled the men of both sides gathered by the gate and the festive atmosphere was gone, replaced by a shouting match. Although this took place at a time when the relations between the countries were better than they'd been for a long time, I got a little bit worried. Luckily it didn't turn into a new shot in Sarajevo but merely died down as the men reunited with the women and children. A lot of families went out along the fence to a stone that marks the actual border and snapped some photos for the family album.

LAHORE

The Old City of Lahore, which consists of a maze of narrow roads and alleys, is surrounded by a moat and filled with bazaars and people—a lot of transactions take place here, some of questionable nature. Defying warnings by exploring it alone, I was pretty wary at first; but after the first day I found nothing but a friendly reception and scenes out of the Arabian Nights, although with small polluting cars and plastic merchandise added. Shaking hands seemed to be a prevalent custom among men and during my stay in Pakistan I probably shook more hands than an American presidential candidate. One day while drifting in the endless bazaar somebody suddenly pressed my hand and when I directed my eyes to the man in front of me a chill went through my spine.





A GUN MANUFACTURER IN DARA ADAM KHEL, WORKING AWAY IN HIS SHOP

In front of me was a man with a knife through his throat and another one through his wrist whose still attached hand held a wad of money. Judging by his smile, and the fact that he was smiling, I assumed a closer inspection would cost some money so I quickly moved along. The knife through the throat was most probably a fake, but the one through the wrist looked darn real—but I didn't want to learn and at the same time encourage people to self-mutilation in order to eke out a living.

HOLIDAY IN OTHER PEOPLE'S MISERY

After a couple months of traveling in nearby countries, I returned to Pakistan to lick my wounds in a comfortable setting, and I found myself back in Lahore due to my connections in the city. It was late spring and the mercury was going through the roof. I started to get some travel fatigue; the enchanting bazaars and street life in Lahore lost some of its luster in the heat. After being fortunate enough to recover and catch my breath for a while in the crossfire of two air conditioners, I set out to experience a truly mythical place, Peshawar. I boarded the train in the evening, found my designated bench, hidden under a

thick layer of dust, and added my sweaty body. When the train sped into the darkness, gusts of air from the window saved me from the assault of the heat outside, where temperatures were hovering around the 45 degree Celsius mark (115 Fahrenheit) on a daily basis. I came to think of how lucky I was in comparison to the majority of the people in Pakistan, of whom about 80 died as a direct result of the heat during the week I spent in Lahore. As the Pakistani writer Moshin Hamid declares in his critically acclaimed novel, *Moth Smoke*:

"There are two social classes in Pakistan," Professor Superb said to his unsuspecting audience, gripping the podium with both hands as he spoke. "The first group, large and sweaty, contains those referred to as the masses. The second group is much smaller, but its members exercise vastly greater control over their immediate environment and are collectively termed the elite. The distinction between members of these two groups is made on the basis of control of an important resource: air conditioning. You see, the elite have managed to re-create for themselves the living standards of, say, Sweden, without leaving the dusty plains of the subcontinent."

The





A DOGON VILLAGE BENEATH THE ESCARPMENT

reality is much worse, though, with more than 35% of the population living in poverty, a relative concept defined by an inability to meet the most basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter in any weather. Despite the indescribable hardship and suffering, many people could still afford a smile or a hospitable gesture. Many times I got invited to share a cup of tea in the street over some small talk—and, in contrast to a lot of other countries, there was never a catch involved. The poverty remains a great tragedy, though, and I'm not sure what infuriates and saddens me the most—the fact that it exists, or the knowledge that the majority of people in the industrial world is not hard at work obliterating it. This was a sidetrack—but if I return to my story, I wake up as the train is coming to a halt in the city of Peshawar.

A MERCURIAL PLACE

The city of Peshawar, which was founded over 2,000 years ago, has had almost as many names as rulers. The proximity of the famous and strategically important Khyber Pass, a vantage point for would-be invaders of the subcontinent and a vital route for traders, made the area a melting pot for different conquerors and civilizations. The footprints of the Mongol invaders, the Chinese pilgrims, and the Tajik traders are still visible. Today Peshawar is embedded in the unruly North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, bordering the Khyber Pass Tribal Agency, one of the seven autonomous tribal areas in the region. The tribal areas were never fully conquered and subjected to outside rule by Alexander, the Moguls, the Sikhs, or the British back in the day, and neither are they today by Pakistan. They are populated by a number of tribes of Pashtu ethnic origin, none of which is known for a pacific nature—hence, it's one of the world's most lawless places. However, The Pashtus must abide by the Pashtunwali, their moral code, and the decisions of its application by the jirga, a council of elders, or they typically get their house burnt down and face expulsion from the tribe. The code, together with a fondness for arms, has made the area ripe with prolonged blood feuds

over *zar, zan* or *zamin* – gold, women, or land. A declining quantity of drugs is still grown and refined in the area, although nowadays it works mostly as a conduit for the stunning volumes coming in from Afghanistan. It seemed like an interesting place, but when the tribal vendettas and clashes between smugglers fail to keep the inhabitants busy enough, the entrepreneurial spirit easily turns their legendary hospitality into kidnapping—so I decided it wasn't really worth the trouble to holiday too much in the area.

THE AFGHAN CONNECTION

Given the proximity to Afghanistan, it's not surprising to learn that the countries are intertwined in more ways than ethnicity (Pashtus have always lived throughout the area, regardless of national borders). When Afghanistan was occupied by the U.S.S.R., it became home to a senseless war. The Afghan guerrilla force, the Mujaheddin, who courageously fought the Soviet aggressors, received money and weapons from a number of countries, among them U.S.A. The goods were funneled through Pakistan's secret service (I.S.I.) and changed hands in the area around Peshawar, where a lot of the military training also took place. The US committed some four to five billion dollars between 1980 and 1992 in aid to the Mujaheddin. However, the C.I.A.-I.S.I. arms pipeline favored the more radical groups, which naturally radicalized others, who were to liberate a country that so far been pretty moderate. Among other things, the U.S. provided the Mujaheddin with some 900 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles in 1986-87. After 1992 the C.I.A. launched a clandestine but unsuccessful buy-back operation to try to retrieve those Stingers not utilized. It's not hard to imagine the harm these easily-operated missiles could do at a civilian airport somewhere in the world—and they were floating around a largely failed state. After the U.S.S.R. withdrew in 1989, leaving more than 1.5 million dead and millions of landmines behind, Afghanistan plunged into a civil war in which several

different warlords mercilessly fought each other while terrorizing the civilian population.

Later, and partly as a reaction, the Taliban movement originated in the many *madrassas* scattered around Peshawar, Quetta, and other Pakistani towns along the Afghan border. A *madrassa* is an Islamic theological school, hence the name of the movement though *talib* means student of Islam, and they offered the only opportunity for Afghan refugees and poor Pakistanis to receive a semblance of an education. The leading Taliban were all veteran Mujaheddin warriors who were dismayed by the moral corruption among their peers. They saw themselves as cleansers and purifiers of a society gone wrong, and the Islamic way that had been compromised by excess and greed. They recruited young students, mostly Afghan refugees and Pashtus, in the *madrassas*, who were disillusioned with the formerly idealized Mujaheddin commanders who now pillaged their country. These were literally children of the war: growing up in refugee camps in Pakistan they hardly knew their own country or history. The young rootless boys seemingly without a future studied little but the Koran and Islamic law as interpreted by barely literate Mullahs, religious teachers. Most of them had never fought before—but, like all Pashtus, they knew how to handle a weapon, and the prospect of returning to their homeland and implementing a just society based on the teachings of the prophet Mohammed filled them with a sense of direction. The specific background of these young men and their seclusion from women while growing up in the *madrassas*, together with their Pashtu tribal traditions, have a lot more to do with the draconic policies of the Taliban, especially the ones targeting women, than with Islamic fundamentalism alone.

When I walked around Peshawar the shadow of Afghanistan was evident in every corner, mostly symbolized by women in blue head-to-toe *burqas* and Afghans begging. I was less of a novelty here

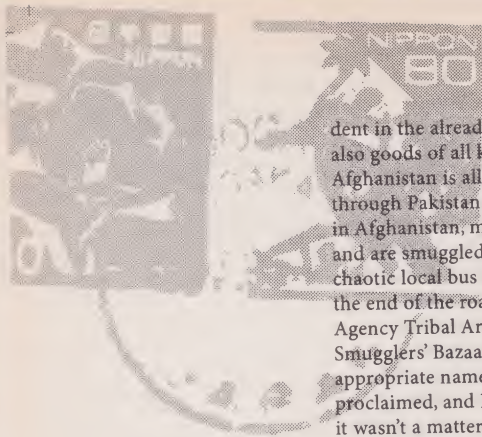
as a foreigner here, since several hundred foreign N.G.O.s (Non-Governmental Organizations) working to address the misery in Afghanistan and the natural result, refugees, have their headquarters in the city. About six million Afghans have been forced to flee their country as a result of more than twenty years of war and the last couple of years of drought, and they now reside under horrible conditions in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran. Peshawar is surrounded by dilapidated camps like Jallozai, where 80,000 people are sheltered under primitive tarps, generally trying to survive under the most desperate conditions. This must be one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes at the planet today. I was in Peshawar six months before September 11 and Pakistan was still supporting the Taliban. The reason was probably the large Pashtu presence in the military and the fact that Pakistan dearly wanted stability in the region, so that they could start trade overland with the Central Asian Republics. Stability was also the keyword that provided the Taliban with backing from the powerful trading mafia whose smuggling and transporting activities were obstructed by the presence by the many small and unpredictable warlords. After twenty years of war a majority of the population also welcomed the Taliban, who had disarmament programs and generally promised security and peace. When their breach with traditional Afghan values like tolerance, their ethnocentrism, and later their failing discipline became apparent, their stocks plummeted. Soon they had a very limited support, of maybe 15% of the population. In exchange for supporting the Taliban, Pakistan got more refugees, extremism, and contraband.

SMUGGLERS' BAZAAR

It isn't only people that are spilling over the border on donkeys and overcrowded trucks and putting a



ANOTHER DOGON VILLAGE



dent in the already stressed Pakistani budget, but also goods of all kinds. Through an arrangement Afghanistan is allowed to import goods tax-free through Pakistan. Due to the lack purchasing power in Afghanistan, most goods do a u-turn in the desert and are smuggled back into Pakistan. I took the chaotic local bus out of the city and jumped off at the end of the road, which continues, into the Khyber Agency Tribal Area. Here lies Karkhani Bazaar, or Smugglers' Bazaar, which is a more colloquial and appropriate name. As my guidebook to the region proclaimed, and I confirmed with my own eyes, it wasn't a matter of some windswept tents where men in turbans sold dusty antiques, but Hong Kong in miniature. Small stores housed alongside weird concrete buildings were jam-packed with TVs, computers, soaps, household appliances, clothes, and everything else imaginable, and beyond. Among the small vendors selling toiletries and other products for more intimate use, I found my favorite article. It was a small tube of "breast enlargement cream" which promised growing breasts after generous application in the region. At the end of the market, where the tribal area starts, there was a gate guarded by the tribal police and huge signs forbidding foreigners to enter. On the other side of the border the commerce continues and the goods are largely made up of arms and drugs. I talked to other travelers at my hostel that managed to sneak around the gate in the company of local friends sharing their devotion for drugs, and they testified about the mass quantities of hash and heroin that are put up for sale. The drugs come sewed up in sheepskin sacks, and big blocks are openly sold for ridiculously low prices. With a pale complexion and without local knowledge and company you might be mistaken for a D.E.A. (the American Drug Enforcement Agency) agent, which needlessly puts you in grave danger. It's estimated that the value of the trade with smuggled goods, without accounting for arms and drugs, is about 2 billion dollars—and this is said to be the spine of the Pakistani black

market sector, which is estimated to be about 55% of Pakistan's G.N.P. (Gross National Product, the annual sum of all goods and services within a country).

HAPPINESS IS A WARM GUN

Along with some other raggedy drifters, I also took a trip to the town of Darra Adam Khel, arranged and lead by the old and authoritative owner of the hostel where we stayed. We kept a low profile in the back of the truck through the checkpoints and villages, while our guide for the day did the talking and lined his pockets with our money. Finally we came to a halt on what felt like another planet, one where Charlton Heston surely would go apeshit. Darra Adam Khel is an unkempt town, situated in the tribal region of the Afridis, hence beyond Pakistani law and somewhat closed to foreigners. We disembarked in an alley, like so many others in the town, which was bustling with activity. The alley was lined with small shops where men were busy doing what they, and their forefathers, have done for a century: namely, making guns. Despite primitive tools, the Darra gunsmiths, estimated to number 3000, are capable of making a working copy of any known firearm. A Darra gunsmith can duplicate a rifle he's never seen before, making the first template in less than ten days; each additional copy then takes between two to three days to finish. We were taken around the little shops by the best guide money can buy, the local tribal police officer. The craftsmen who were sanding, drilling and carving either acknowledged us with a smile or by proudly showing off their finished products. A wide array of weapons is manufactured in the town: Kalashnikovs, M16s, most varieties of handguns, shotguns, hand grenades, rocket launchers and even anti-aircraft guns. It was a surreal experience walking through the little alleys, meeting fierce-looking men with arms casually slung over their shoulders, all to an accompaniment of constant firing, emanating



A DOGON VILLAGE IN MALI, ON THE DUSTY SANDPLAIN

from everywhere a gunsmiths happened to be trying out finished products. While we were drinking the customary cup of tea, a small arsenal was circulated at the table, and we negotiated the prices for trying the different weapons. We went around a house and shot Kalashnikov at a nearby cliff, as well as pistol at a pile of bricks, while little kids ran around to collect the shells. The area has grown into one of the largest unofficial arms markets in the world. It might be worth mentioning that the majority of suffering due to weaponry originates in official markets, despite the sometimes glossy packaging (as described by John Pilger in *The Hidden Agenda*). A copied Kalashnikov started off at about 80 dollars and handguns about half of that. We were also showed a 22-calibre gun disguised in a pen, engraved with the name of the town, which was selling for 8 dollars. It's estimated that between 400 and 700 guns are finished in Darra Adam Khel every day. A lot of them used to cross the border into Afghanistan before the Afghan warlords found other benefactors willing to fuel the fire. Nowadays most of the arms end up within the borders of Pakistan, especially in the tribal areas, but they are readily found throughout the society.

From Peshawar I traveled north in search of greener pastures and a more mild climate, which was to be found where the three great mountain ranges meet. There among the Himalayas, the Hindukush, and Indus mountains I found my Shangri-La.

Recommended reading:

Moth Smoke, Moshin Hamid (*An interestingly written novel about the decadent life of the upper class in Lahore*)

Taliban - Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia, Ahmed Rashid (*A good introduction to Taliban, the struggle over the oil in the region and its geopolitical implications*)

Danziger's Travel, Nick Danziger (*An account of an exciting journey through the region during the Afghan war with the U.S.S.R., with Nick paying little regard for borders, visas, or money*)

3. THE FUNERAL SHOW

HOLD YOUR PANTS

I'm relieving my bladder as I'm watching the sun setting over a mesmerizing landscape from my position behind the last train carriage. I figured it was safe to get off the train after watching some other passengers crowding around a nearby well in order to wash themselves before evening prayer. Meanwhile others were eating dinner provided by the many crafty locals that sprung out of the nearby village with a veritable restaurant on top of their head. It was yet another unexplainable stop in the middle of nowhere on the only railway route open for passengers in that end of West Africa. It's something very mythical to be looking out from a train window and be graced with the picturesque image of the vast African savannahs while having the repetitive beat of the sills to soothe your ears. I can't really find the words to describe it but I think Hemingway got it right somewhere, even though I wouldn't know, because I haven't read a word he's written. Lost in thoughts, now as then, I buttoned my fly when suddenly the train whistle cut through the serenity and the train started moving as rapidly as unexpectedly. It accelerated faster than ever before,

with me running frantically behind, trying to catch up with the last carriage. I managed to swing myself up at the last door, with the aid of friendly hands and that vertical handle, like I was the star in a bad western movie. We pulled up some other runners but a majority who foresaw their defeat threw up their hands in a desperate gesture and screamed. I was extremely relieved to be onboard and not left in the middle of nowhere without even a sweater, let alone the rest of my luggage. The next train wasn't scheduled to pass until after a couple of days, assuming it didn't derail. The train driver didn't seem to bat an eyelid, and we continued to gain speed with every meter along a trajectory that took us further into the impending darkness and the country of Mali.

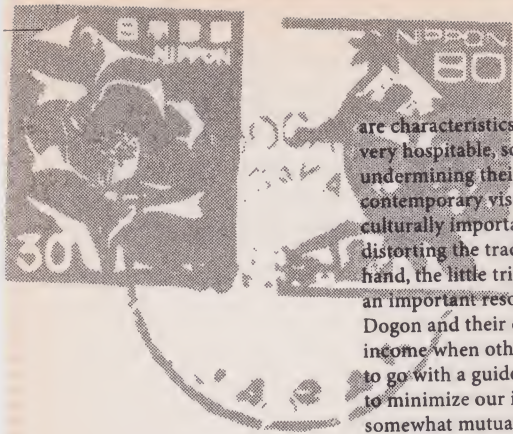
BAMAKO

It took the capital in the fifth poorest country in the world for me to swallow my pride and take refuge under the cross. I checked into a primitive hostel run by a convent and some stern catholic nuns in order to escape from the chaos. It's plausible to think that the capital in a country like this would be a sleepy affair but nothing could be further from the truth. When I first arrived at night I teamed up with some other travelers at the train station while trying to find some kind of accommodation. We walked into the dark night on streets that were lined with literally thousands of people sound asleep on the pavement. I couldn't possibly have felt smaller and more vulnerable walking those streets with only a little switchblade knife as possible defense if someone would try to take more than my wallet. At last we found the hostel before bad luck found us, and when we woke up the next morning the city didn't look quite the same—it was bustling with activity that would put any anthill to shame. Thousands of busses, mopeds, and cars chased the impending accident on roads of differing quality. I think that the majority of the roads were gravel as opposed to tarmac. Every available inch of the pavement was covered with people and vendors hawking their products. I didn't find God in the hostel, just some other travelers, among them some female volunteers on a break from their stationing in Mauritania. We were heading towards the same area, the Dogon country, and decided to go together as well as sharing the cost of a guide to the area.

DOGON COUNTRY

The Dogon people of Mali are famous for their art, distinctive adobe architecture, colorful masked dances, and ceremonies. Their culture is based upon animistic religious beliefs and is being preserved through a tightly knit social structure with intensely cooperative group behavior. The Dogon have made their home along the remarkable Bandagara escarpment, a 200-kilometer cliff face which runs like a wall across the desert. Their picturesque villages scatter the foot of the cliff, which is at places perforated with little caves that served as protection from marauding groups and slave raiders for hundreds of years. On the rocky rubble below and in the sandy plains and fields stretching out from there, the Dogon, who are skilled agriculturalists, raise millet, onions, sorghum, and other crops, despite the inhospitable environment. Communal labor, collective action, and group responsibility





are characteristics of Dogon village life. They are very hospitable, something which may be a factor undermining their culture and cohesion. The contemporary visitors don't take or buy slaves, but culturally important art objects, as well as risking distorting the traditional village life. On the other hand, the little trickle of tourists have also become an important resource in ensuring the survival of the Dogon and their culture by providing them with an income when other sources dry up. Hence we decided to go with a guide that came highly recommended, to minimize our impact and make the encounter somewhat mutually beneficial to both parties. Working as a guide has become a lucrative business, attracting a lot of people without the necessary knowledge, discretion, or ethnicity. After wading through offers including impostors we finally met our man, David, in the village of Sanga. We left for our trek the next day and our guide David negotiated our passage through homes and villages, by paying fees and distributing the *kola* nuts as required, on top of explaining every cultural trait under the sun as we went along. The *kola* nut is a purple-colored nut frequently used as a gift to and among the Dogons, who chew on them. They're supposed to give you a mild intoxication but I came halfway through the chestnut sized devil before the extremely bitter taste threw me off so I can't tell you what it's like.

THE FUNERAL

We got back to Sanga after spending a couple of days trekking along the escarpment and staying in the little villages, and I was starting to feel really sick. There was a funeral in a nearby village and our guide David asked the village elder if our little group could attend. We were given permission to attend a ceremony that lasted for at least two nights. The first night I felt too sick to move and while the others went, I laid on the roof of our primitive hotel like a fish on dry land, gasping for a gust of cool air. I slept quite a bit on roofs all over West Africa for that reason, but I didn't really bother with mosquito nets, which is probably what made me sick in the first place. Later that night the others came back all excited and gibbered incoherently about all they had witnessed. I wasn't sure whether it was just another feverish dream because it sounded pretty unreal. The next afternoon I joined them and we all walked over to the village for the second day of rituals. When we approached the village we were greeted by a large mob armed with spears and antique rifles who ran along the village perimeter while shouting and screaming. The first thought that flashed through my mind was that we were on the menu that night, but our guide David explained that they were circling the village in order to ward off all the evil spirits that settle after the somebody dies. All the villagers were gathered in the little town square and we were assigned some space on the roof of a mud hut overlooking it. The epicenter of the square was a dead cow, which had been slaughtered sacrificially and adorned with various fetishes, sacred objects and the deceased man's shroud. The women were gathered in a colorful and improvised choir along one side and they sung and clapped to the beat of African drums. Most of them were wearing the traditional African dress, although some sported an odd sun bleached clothing item of foreign kind—the very same clothes people in rich countries donate to aid organizations

who ship them over there. It was an enchanting and surreal musical carpet to the events that took place. In front of us the men were gathered and most of them were armed with ancient looking rifles. They took turns doing a little dance around the corpse of the dead cow before firing into the air to ward off the evil spirits. They on the other hand seemed to be in good spirits and it was a festive atmosphere, no doubt fueled by the reunion with their kin in the village and home-made millet beer. Most young men were sporting more modern clothes and were more cosmetically adorned, with some small traditional clothing item. This is probably due to the structural male migration that is common in Africa, and other societies marked by economic dualism, where young men leave for the cities in order to find a job and make money. I don't struggle with romantic notions of cultural purity, but it was truly weird to see a young man ceremonially dancing with a rifle while being dressed in a traditional garb complemented with modern sneakers and sunglasses. I did however struggle with my grip on reality, partly because of the heat and my sickness, but mostly because of the incredible scenes that were played out in front of my eyes. It never felt like a dream, though, since the dreams I had at the time were all really horrible stories induced by my preferred brand of malaria prophylactic. After a while the ceremony was crowned by a group of men dancing while wearing the incredible masks that the Dogon people are famous throughout the world for sporting on special occasions. The masks, which are kept in a sacred cave for most of the year, are colorful and very elongated. The longest ones extended for several meters over the wearers' heads. The group of men bearing the masks, as well as some other amazing clothes and bijouterie, were performing dances in which they were letting the long mask sway back and forward in front of the enthusiastic audience. I felt privileged to be immersed in such a scene and celebration and it was truly a Kodak moment, if there ever been one, but we weren't allowed to take pictures. After the ceremonies were over the whole village seemed to be fermenting with joy, as was the millet beer in everybody's stomachs. This brew taste a little bit like German wheat beer, but my already weak legs prevented me from joining in and putting the Munich October fest to shame. Although fatigued, I was happy as a clam when I walked back to my mattress on the roof to write the next chapter in my history book, largely dealing with the continued illness which later forced me to cut my trip short and return home.

Recommended reading:

Dogon – Africa's People of the Cliffs, Walter Beek and Stephanie Hollyman (*Large book with nice pictures and informative texts*)

stockholm

(INTERNATIONAL) NOISE CONSPIRACY
VIDEO SHOOT

Respectfully submitted to HeartattaCk by freelance gossip columnist B. Dee

Mercilessly bootlegged and reprinted here by CrimethInc. assholes bent on getting in even more trouble than they have already.

It's a scene out of a Fellini movie. Three and a half years after I first saw Refused reinvent punk rock as a pop culture molotov cocktail that left me sobbing and soaring with new, unrealized dreams of revolution, I am pursuing a budding and already doomed bohemian love affair at the insular, insulated artists' collective where their former drummer lives—and I tag along with their former roadie to see their former singer's new band, who are shooting their latest video for MTV. Dennis, said singer, insists that this new band is an equally subversive project, intended to create and encourage revolutionary desires in the masses. Perhaps inconveniently, I take him at his word about their intentions, though many of our mutual comrades now assume their politics to be a purely aesthetic aspect of a pop music career. Now I show up to be the token hardliner at the "radical" band's video shoot, sullenly taking notes in the corner as my "less committed" contemporaries are primed and preened by cosmetics girls for the harsh light of the cameras ("you should write to HeartattaCk about this," jokes Dennis, and I laugh). It's a familiar dynamic—I refuse to get my hands dirty by participating in the day's events, but as a friend from way-back-when I still expect to be fed, in exchange for parading my intransigence on the sidelines. I'm the "street cred" flown in from the U.S.A., the ghost of punk rock past lingering in the MTV studio, here to spread revolutionary guilt and cash in on a free meal in return; I'm the anarchist on the guest list: everything is free for me because—well, just read my manifesto. I'll spend the breaks in shooting critiquing my friends' tactics and credibility, and assume I'm doing everyone a favor.

Well, be that as it may. We arrive at the location, a shell of a house in the richest neighborhood of Stockholm, and the inside is done up in 1970's retro decor, including vintage typewriters and musical equipment, a couple old posters for demonstrations, and a hammer-n-sickle or two. The director in his casual denim suit and professional-free-spirited-artist's curls is bustling about with the film crew, scorching lights are being adjusted, and the youth in attendance are all picture perfect in those nauseating retro fashions that express nostalgia for the television shows of yesteryear. The rouged and mascara'd women especially provide quite a contrast to the unshaven, Rubenesque feminist I spent the previous night with. If I didn't "know the band, dude," it seems certain a boy like me would only be here if he sneaked in to raid the buffet—which I can't find anywhere, incidentally.

Dennis explains the plotline to me: they've bought the rights to some kitsch 1970's action movie in which police surround a house of outlaws. Thanks to splicing, the police will be outside, while inside the music fans and radical band are partying in defiance of them. Quite a fine fee—upwards of ten thousand dollars—has been paid to use the film and techniques

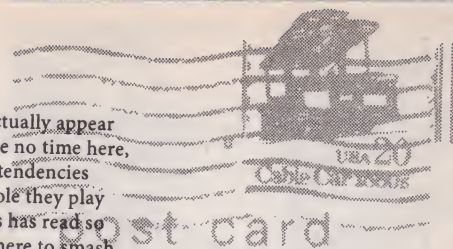
of that bygone day, so the video will actually appear to have been shot back then. Let's waste no time here, gentle reader, considering what social tendencies are expressed by retro chic and what role they play in the "society of the spectacle" Dennis has read so much about. The point is—well, we're here to smash capitalism by having a good time, aren't we? That's what the video is about, anyway.

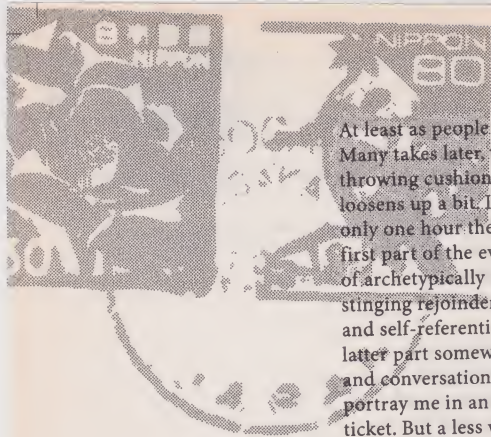
There will be subtitles in the finished version—the police lamenting that the kids are having that fun "outside the structures of commodity relations" and must therefore be stopped. I joke that the chief pig should instruct his henchmen "If you can't arrest them, at least put them on MTV!" and Dennis likes the idea—maybe they'll use it. I resist encouragement to get powdered up and appear in the video myself, clinging to the antiquated notion that when none of us are on television, it will cease to exist. Dennis, for his part, politely declines to wear my KROSSA USA! (that's Swedish for "smash the U.S.A.") shirt, since the bandmates are all dressed in matching uniforms (my shirt is black, though, just like the one he's wearing), and emphasizes the "fun" aspects of the video; he doesn't want to undermine these by specifically mentioning the police shootings in Gothenburg, showing people actually fighting the pigs, or otherwise stepping over the line.

The director assembles the band and their friends before the cameras, and in the moments prior to shooting, Dennis warms up a little, prancing like a Swedish Mick Jagger—it's something he does well, though it's still ambiguous whether he has learned the pop language of his enemies in order to subvert their hegemony over culture production, or just been colonized, bodily, by their standards of hipness, their fashion "consciousness," their images of youth and style. The director yells the Swedish equivalent of "action!" and everyone is dancing about, trying hard to look like they're having the "good time" Dennis spoke of.

At this moment, looking on, I profoundly miss the environment of a good basement punk show, where this good time is real and not representation. If nothing else, if it does no more to liberate the masses, at least there one aspect of the equation is decidedly real and unambiguous. Here, watching my comrades acting out that "good time outside the commodity system" to make an advertisement for a commodity, it's difficult to tell where—or if—the pose ends and reality begins. And I can't stop wondering—when do we eat? Is there a buffet anywhere in this building?

Admittedly, it's early (it turns out work starts at 8 a.m. in the rock-n-roll world, too... coincidence?), and the film crew can only add to the overdeveloped self-consciousness of Swedish middle class youth, but I expected to see a little more enthusiasm. The d.i.y. punks of D.S. 13 seem to be struggling as hard to enjoy the one-liner irony of their participation as everyone else is to enjoy posing for the cameras sincerely. I can't shake the feeling that no one here, not the d.i.y. punks nor the pop radicals nor their various hangers-on, harbors any real conviction that Things Can Change, that this or anything will jerk the capitalist world out of orbit. "We are up for sale, everything that we know is up for sale" keens Dennis' voice over the stereo, and it sounds, here, like a statement of fact, not the bitter, furious challenge it should be.





At least as people wake up, I start to see some smiles. Many takes later, the joker from D.S. 13 begins throwing cushions off the couch, and everyone loosens up a bit. I'm quite worn out myself: I slept only one hour the night before, having spent the first part of the evening engaged in my own brand of archetypically useless activity, composing a stinging rejoinder to a hostile review in an obscure and self-referential anarchist periodical, and the latter part somewhat more sensibly making love and conversation with my new crush and—let's not portray me in an unnecessarily flattering light—meal ticket. But a less weary, less cynical observer could almost imagine that these young people are engaged in something idealistic and exciting, playing with the social forms of expression (music videos, left wing politics, youth culture) offered them rather than letting themselves be played with by them... as the kids on the *other side* of the television screen will inevitably be. Too bad that in this spectator society, anyone who stops watching for a minute and does something ends up becoming a spectacle for everyone else to watch—at least, that is, if you do it in front of the cameras. But *everyone* is glued to those screens, so if your good ideas aren't on them, no one will ever find out about them—right?

Lunch finally comes, and a Stockholm punk with amazingly long dreadlocks who has nonetheless been dutifully shaking his booty in the crowd shots comes up to compliment me on my own d.i.y. band's latest recording (so you see: we are all involved in some kind of commodity production). Thankfully, the conversation soon passes on to the merits of various squats in Milan, and then to his two friends who are facing prison terms, one from the demonstrations in Gothenburg, the other from streetfighting with Stockholm fascists. At least something's going on out there. Dennis comes back over and speaks to me about books he plans to write—I hope he does.

Now let's stop beating around the bush—are the (I.)N.C. the long-awaited heirs of Guy Debord and Che Guevara come to rescue us all from our neoliberal oppressors, or not? Does it do any good to make fucking music videos for the revolution, or d.i.y. punk records for that matter? What am I getting at here?

One thing is certain—the snide criticism groups like the 'Noise Conspiracy receive from our side of the d.i.y.-or-don't-d.i.y. debate doesn't help them to focus any more on getting things done. Alienated by the self-righteousness of their former comrades, they have less and less reason to take the idea of revolution seriously—and surely it becomes correspondingly easier for them to let it become a publicity gimmick, even when they started out believing in it. No wonder Dennis has started to talk nonsense, like "if nothing else, I think it's good at least to help people have a good time"—that makes sense when you're playing for striking miners, but comfortable middle class rock fans? They need provoking, not positive reinforcement. And yet, who better to provide that challenge than bands like Dennis's, especially since we d.i.y. punks are busy elsewhere?

As I stated above, I take my friends who proclaim themselves revolutionaries at their word that they mean it, whether their actions are intelligible to me or not. Even if in the most secret chambers of their

hearts they do want nothing but fame and fortune, I still know from seeing those things destroy other friends that I wouldn't be doing them any favors to leave them to that pursuit. So the question is what it would take for their lunatic scheme of undermining the "society of the spectacle" by creating a spectacle to work; since they seem committed to trying this path, it won't do them or anyone else any good for me just to criticize and feel superior. I have to do my part to figure out what, if anything, they could do in this medium to actually challenge the system we all hate. Sitting upstairs in the empty cosmeticians' room, I wrack my blank brain, as I have been for months and years, for what the missing piece could be that I or anyone could provide to make what my friends are doing as effective, as dangerous as they say they want it to be.

As it stands, the police, who will look so cute and retro in the video, are outside this and every building, surrounding us, and we're all in here, trying to have a good time or at least look like we are, trying not to look out the windows, out of fear or anger or frustrated longing for the world they hold against us. We all find ways to survive inside with our consciences intact, some of us sooner, others later and only by reinventing ourselves as "professional revolutionaries" who nonetheless need to eat somehow. It takes courage to discard fear and pride alike, to remember all the dreams that don't come any more true for being listened to or sung about on records. That courage comes in short supply when we congratulate ourselves too much for the little things we do to feel we are still fighting, whether they be MTV videos or d.i.y. magazines. We need to be a little more desperate to risk what we need to risk to see that Things *Can* Change. Perhaps despair is our only hope.

Discussion Questions for Advanced Readers:

1. Why does the writer go to such lengths to portray himself in as ironic a light as he does the band? Does he actually succeed in doing this? To what extent does this approach—and these discussion questions themselves—function as a defensive measure to stave off criticism?
2. In the third paragraph, does the author's contrast of the women at the video shoot to the woman he is sleeping with imply that a woman who wears make-up or shaves is less feminist than one who does not? Even if it doesn't, is it acceptable for a male author to make implications of any kind as to whether a given woman is a feminist or not? For that matter—what are the implications of using a term ("Rubenesque") derived from a male painter's portrayals of women's bodies to describe a feminist? And where does he get off writing about their sex life for a widely circulated magazine?
3. Is it any coincidence that the piece does exactly what it counsels against (snidely criticizing the tactics of mass media bands from a d.i.y. standpoint), and does not do what it specifically demands (presenting practical solutions to the problem of how to make their approach effective)? Is any amount of irony enough to excuse this inconsistency? Or is this piece perhaps intended to work on an entirely different level than the one it appears to?

address charges of defamation of character, bring suits for libel and slander, or mail tip-offs for future gossip columns to Always In Trouble c/o CrimethInc.

scandinavia

THE SCANDINAVIAN EVASIONTANK: I JUST WALKED ON OFF.

PREMISE PREFACE: will and moe stage a hitchhiking race.

STARTING LINE: the A-1, rijssen, the netherlands.

FINISH: front door of demon box, stockholm (actually sundbyberg), sweden.

DISTANCE: 1000+ km.

EXPECTED TIME TO COMPLETE: 2 days.

RATIONS: 1/2 loaf bread + spreads.

prayers, singing, and talking to oneself: allowed.

MONEY: banished.

moe wins paper-rock-scissors to go first, and he's off in 20 minutes while i collect stares under the bridge. it takes me 4 rides to get to an on-ramp in osnabrück, germany, where i coax a miraculous ride all the way north to kiel.

so here i am in kiel, germany, a port city in the north. screwed. rain. alone. the equivalent of 10 bucks. i had caught a ride all the way there from the holland/german border with a sweet young german girl who loved elvis. with her, and those eyes, i had decided not to take the prescribed route (a little farther east) to a different ferry port, definitely the better route. she took me out of her way straight into the ferry station, i didn't even have to ask her. kiel, contrary to my initial ideas, would show only one way out: a ferry. my choices were denmark, finland, norway, and sweden. it happened that none of the ferries were going anywhere near where i needed to go, except one—and it was leaving soon to göteborg, sweden (intimidating even to look at the mere name!), NOT where i needed or wanted to go. but shit, it was to somewhere in SWEDEN, and that's a start!

at the info/ticket counter, i found out that it was at least 75 dollars just to walk on, and 14 hours long—completely and utterly bourgeois. and to make matters worse, it was full (i was told untruthfully by the sweet blonde swedish clerk; i found out it in fact WASN'T full!), so i began asking folks in the car line if i could ride on with them in their cars. as a side note, i was just then getting over my shyness about approaching folks and straight up asking them for a ride (and i'm constantly reminded how much it really sucks that i only speak english). soon i learned that i was even more screwed than i originally thought. getting on the ferry required a pass through kontrol (border customs, etc.), and all the tickets for the cars had the number of people on them, so i couldn't just ride on with someone. or could i? none of the cars were even nice to me, and none of the truckers were helping out (one even dared to tell me "i don't speak english"—IN ENGLISH!!!), but it turned out that one of the last cars i was going to ask as the ferry was loading agreed to let me in and try to make it through. and it figures he was listening to bad metal: "oh you like hardcore... well CHECK THIS OUT!!! #°E&((°E#!&#E&#%#." terrible. but i didn't

care—he was down with trying to sneak me on, down with the cause!

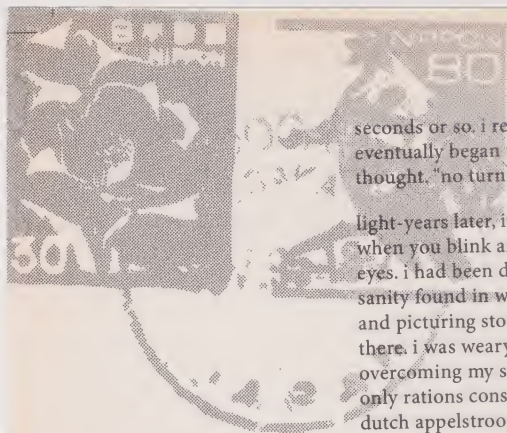
he had a car that was fairly empty of stuff to cover me up, so we had to wing it. as we got to the kontrol, we saw that there was nobody actually searching the cars, so i decided that i would just lay low in the backseat and be a stupid american. adrenaline. hopelessness. fear. vows. as we passed by, the driver stopped so that the angle between me and the clerk was minimal (a sketchy, haphazard tactic, if you ask me), and somehow we made it through. afterwards, he told me "yeah, i just looked her straight in the eyes the whole time, intimidating like, and she obeyed my every command." (!!!) now, if i wasn't so relieved and grateful to the universe, i would have busted out laughing at this freak. and further, there was something eerie about him and the woman in the front seat; i got this strange feeling that they were on the way back from some sort of bank robbery or a mafia "sleeping with the fishes" operation, and they were just keeping their cool. "i'm in the belly," i thought.

so, amidst the still-sketchy-walkie-talkie-wielding kontrol officers, i set foot on the heavy metal of the 12 story (that's right) fucking floating skyscraper. god damn this shit was HUGE.

the Stena Lines ferry had everything a small city has, basically, plus a casino and minus bike punks. i soon found out that everyone on the ferry had a cabin, and that i was probably the only one without one, among the 1500 or so passengers. so, i had to come up with a plan of what to do between the times when the café closed at 3 a.m. and reopened at 7 a.m. i know it's only 4 hours, but it's not easy when you have sketchy bags, sleep deprivation hallucinations, and you LOOK and FEEL like (and are) a stowaway. i was freaking out because i knew that if i was discovered, i would have to pay a butt-load of money in tickets and fines at least, and—worst of all—I would have to face the fact that my evasiontank had failed, i had lost, gulping defeat.

while people were still walking about with their snazzy luggage, i did so as well with my "oh, he's a traveling punk" bags (i shake my head at this), searching for a hiding place for the night. i found no such place, and after a while i realized that nobody else had their bags out, so, employing my main guerrilla strategy (blending in), i found a neutral couch and put up my flag. i sat there, and then sat there some more. i walked around and sat there. two hours had passed and we hadn't even started moving yet! this was when i knew it was going to be the longest night of my life. in fact it's probably still going on, somewhere. i thought about the night last fall that i spent shivering in an alcove outside of a building under construction in san sebastian, northern spain. those hours passed like crotch-rockets on the autobahn compared to this time. and this time i had kontrol to be invisible to.

i was halfway between the video game pavilion and the '80's cafe, with "music" from both in the respective ears, my longest night premonitions confirmed. i wondered if there existed a disease yet called "cross-musication of the brain" or if i was going to be the first diagnosis and fatality. at one point i had super mario in my left and "take... these broken wings..." in my right. they actually came in sync about every 45



seconds or so. i read and wrote in my journal, and we eventually began to inch away from kiel. "finally," i thought. "no turning back."

light-years later, it was 1 a.m. you know you're tired when you blink and have trouble reopening your eyes. i had been doing this for a few hours, my only sanity found in writing about this whole fiasco, and picturing stockholm and my brother's new life there. i was weary from constantly challenging and overcoming my shyness and complacency, and my only rations consisted of 9 slices of dutch bread, dutch appelstroop, and the ever-present punk-traveling-companion belly-filling getting-old-quick (dutch) peanut butter. there was a WC (toilet) just across the room, and i planned on resorting to sleep there, in the dried piss of the small stretch of tile. sleeping out in the open was an invitation to the question "so, why are you not sleeping in your cabin?" to which i had no wits to conjure a decent response. i denounced myself for not finding out more about the operations and formats of the ferry before getting on. it was 2 a.m. now, and time for me to move spots.

i had been on my couch for pretty much 8 hours and people were beginning to wonder about me. earlier, one asshole who i had asked if he could take me onto the ferry stopped and dared to question me: "did you pay for a ticket?" "no, i just got on." "well, you have to pay." "um, yeah, i'll probably pay when i get off." "ok." "ok." i really HATE people like that. mind your own fucking business. you have your way of doing things and i have mine. and mine is FREE!!! the scary staff people (who were obviously a bunch of former bodybuilders and army boot camp drill sergeants) began coming by and locking things and cleaning things, their jingling keys becoming the sound i link to a certain humiliating death sequence. i went to the WC and started wondering if they would be cleaning it like everything else for the morning crowd, so i called an emergency reevaluation meeting with myself.

we concluded we would instead go sleep in the car decks under a car, or find a place there somewhere. so, risking being spotted and sure death, i raced down the corridors and steps to the LOCKED door to the car areas. "baaahhh!", the sweat screamed from my bewildered body, from an already dehydrated punk kid just trying to save a buck and catch some zzzz's in the meantime.

i turned around in amusement at the submission hold now had on me by the ferry goddesses, and my eyes happen to rest on the place where i was to lurk for the "night": a dark corner under the stairs, just barely out of sight from most viewpoints. it was crazy enough that it just might work, and this was the ultimate gamble—a much heavier wager than those made above me on the casino tables. i cuddled with the wall and my beloved bags in the fetal position for 5 hours, from about 2 a.m. until 7 a.m. now, this was some shit. i can't sit in a chair without sitting upside down in it after 10 minutes, so hiding here took the most exhaustive abandonment i have ever undertaken.

throughout those hours, the time was so thick i had to chew it before swallowing. the seconds were so slow i could've named each one, and pleaded with it to PLEASE hurry up. i cramped up and my butt was numb after the first 12 minutes. i heard footsteps above me. i froze. the jangling keys, they are coming. i watched like an owl as each control person came

and went, without turning around to spot my bulging eyes between the 5th and 6th step. there was one every now and then, but i really couldn't tell (i had no timepiece, a pivotal contributor to my apparent madness). some looked around, and some unlocked the door to the car deck, where i was glad i didn't go. i dozed in increments of 5-15 minutes, but i was always somewhere between an REM comatose and a clockwork-orange-style forced awakeness. they never found me, and the angels rang at 7 a.m.: "(soft music)... (blah, blah in swedish and german)... ladies and gentlemen, it's 7 am, the café and breakfast bar are now open..." i figured there were angels, but i didn't think they would speak through the Stena Lines PA.

i emerged, cracked my bones back into place, and they echoed through the stairwell. it took me a full 3 minutes to re-boot my memory and locomotion systems and for my heartbeat to return to normal. lifting my head, i felt like i had earned something, something that i'd known i would earn some day, but didn't know what. i smiled and became a person who had slept under the stairs on a ferry to sweden. i had come that much closer to really knowing myself and my capabilities. i had shed old skin. and above all, i now know where to never, ever hide again.

walking was fun. walking up the stairs was even more fun. i found my couch just where i had left it, and i celebrated with a cup of coffee. 30 minutes later i had it: freedom. i just walked on off. "i win!", i screamed, but all the other passengers who paid couldn't hear me, didn't know me, didn't know what i was feeling! i think i actually floated off the ramp! i guess all they cared about was drinking the cases upon cases of freaking beer they were toting around on their luggage dollies all the way from germany.

i passed through another kontrol and a drug-sniffing dog (where a sign told me i was supposed to have my boarding pass ready for someone—and this gave me one last heartattack before i realized it was nothing), and into the arms of the fresh swedish morning air. no more boats. no more running. i win.

EPILOGUE: i take the final few hundred kilometers by 25 dollar bus, and make it to the Box 4 hours before moe, who took a train for the last leg (we both sold out, i know). i still win.

but i haven't yet gotten my cup of coffee.

[Editor's Notes: For the uninitiated, an "Evasiontank" is presumably a Think Tank (see Inside Front #13, among other sources, for thorough discussion) applied specifically to the project of getting away with stuff. Also—I can't help but add this observation from experience, which will probably only heighten readers' enjoyment of Will's tale of tribulation, but may well make him shake his head and sigh: I've ridden at least one ferry on that route before, and there were a few people—our band, for example—who had opted not to pay the extra expense for a room, and just slept, bandanas over our eyes, on the floor in the main hall while those folks with key rings Will feared so much walked about. Perhaps there were no roomless passengers on Will's ferry besides him, but unless something has drastically changed on that ferry line, I think he could have just hung out wherever and he would have been fine! Probably the stress and exhaustion, and the difficulties of being in a brand new situation with no context, heightened his paranoia

li

to dangerous levels—I've certainly experienced the same thing. Your friends find you hiding out under the stairwell, shaking and sweating, after a night's direct action gone awry, and can't persuade you no matter how hard they try that it's safe to come out and hang out with everyone else. Maybe one day all us scam-punks will lose it and move in under the stairwells for good. Let's hope the revolution comes and the ferries are all free before then!]

savannah, ga

MAY 31 2002 GREYHOUND TERMINAL
SAVANNAH GEORGIA

Today was beautiful. Sometimes, my head says "live, don't document." Today, I'm willing to take up the pen, feeling good and relaxed, ending this little trip with a ride on the hound, no photo finish this time. "Patience makes the hobo strong."

It takes a while to relearn patience after being in the City for so long—all subways and epic walks through the canyons of culture and architecture. I'm on different time here, road time, hobo time in the American south, the humidity hitting its stride the deeper I go.

I'm looking forward to the farm, if for a few days of sticky contemplation. The world ends here: at the heart. The sunset is righteous in Savannah today, its pale blue and silver lined clouds; last night was even more magnificent—Carolina ablaze, all oranges dashed with pink. I took a few snapshots from the piggyback, but the train gods snatched them away this morning, along with my Bolivian pasamontañas: all in exchange for free passage, no hobo humiliation, no overnight stay in the Williamsburg Co. jail, no premature end to my teaching career. A batch of snapshots and that beloved knit cap, even trade I guess for my freedom; summer is coming, I suppose I'll have to get a new look.

Savannah! Deep with history, fat tourists, fat harbor, fat heart of the American south—love it until I die. I woke up this morning in Kingstree, South Carolina, seat of Williamsburg Co, one of the poorest regions in the state, so says David of the Marcus dept. store: a jew and fine conversationalist, his family fled Brooklyn in the late forties; Kingstree had one of the few synagogues in the area, though they had to go 80 miles to Charleston to get a kosher butcher. Kingstree population 3000 or so, drops a little every year.

I woke up in that sleepy town this morning to the rough static of the police radios: "okay, the train is stopped, we'll find him." Fuck. Yep, that's me, guilty as sin, all bundled up in a sleeping bag, uniformed cop and rail employee less than fifteen feet away. "You go up, I'll go down" the cop says, my freedom passing before my eyes, dead center of Main street, Kingstree, got its name three hundred years ago—not far away, the masts of the British King's ships were cut from the mighty forests.

The railroad man nods to the cop and looks dead at my car, cramped up beneath the giant wheels of the trailer truck, hoping for a 'deus ex machina' style reprieve, and the guy chuckles "yep, gonna find us a hobo" seemingly to me not five feet away. He passed my car and I grabbed my bag, and casually, like I was

rolling out of bed, jumped off the train, slowly, deer-in-headlights-like, walking in the opposite direction. No gods from the sky, just me, incredibly, walking away somehow, amid flashlights blaring everywhere against the radio static. They never found that hobo, though I did enjoy waiting in the high weeds behind the nearby Piggly Wiggly for the next five hours, awaiting dawn, not more than 100 yards from the scene of the crime: two shooting stars assuaged my nervousness, and I swore to myself I'd get on the first bus out of town. 18 hours ago, fugitive heat, fear and excitement. Now, a cooling memory, and yet another travel story.

More to come. Florida bound, D

olympia, wa

ALLEYWAY PARTY APRIL 2002

I was thinking of you so much last night, when the kids of the town took over an alley in the midst of a boring "art" festival. We paraded through with a giant festive vagina, then set up a generator and P.A. in the alley between a bakery and a record store... the walls got covered with graffiti in a few minutes, and the ground strewn with flowers; an altar was erected to Sampa Mayka, goddess of garbage and alley-dwellers, and before long the music started—and the dancing. And yes, there was the usual stand-offish self-consciousness... but there was also rampant silliness, discarded pride, even glimpses of absolute abandon. As it got dark and the moon came out, rumors kept spreading (as always) that the cops were just about to shut it down—making it the perfect time for pounding drums and a fire show. So we burned up the parking lot with dancing and the cops stayed away and it was one of those beautiful circles where you look at the faces around you and know that you are all right there, for those moments, in the same place and on the same plane, and that space is free.

It went on that way. Just a few things I think you would have appreciated (I did): The kid crowdsurfing in a fucking alley! The kids from up the street totally rocking out on Nirvana covers and nothing but—and two thirds of the crowd wailing along into the mic with them—one of the mics was just out in the crowd, nowhere near the band. Finally, Nervous Chris wildly making out, in the midst of the dancing crowd, with some girl who just grabbed him. He stopped kissing long enough to ask "What's your name?"—then dove right back into it. Then and there I knew this was liberated territory.

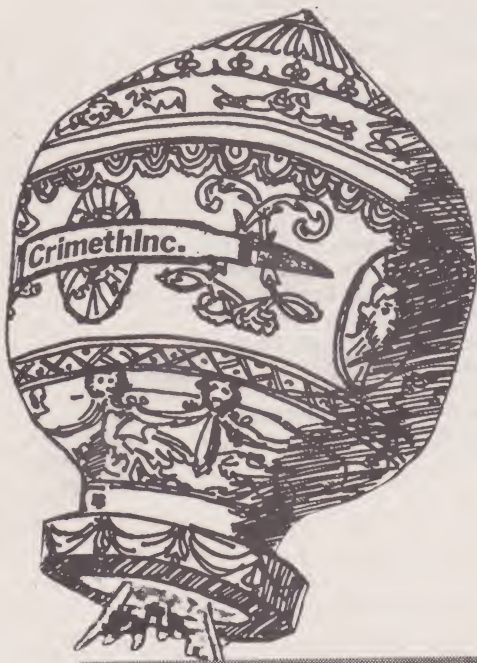
Oh que vida, que pena... Keeping afloat on a raft of coffee and hope. Yours with love, H--

Special Continental Scene Report and Retrospective



*It felt as if we'd left
the bad old days for
good—just a few
minutes before a
rainbow appeared to
us all in the middle*

FLYING CIRCUS



*of the night, to
confirm that we had
entered fairyland
by sheer triumph
of camaraderie,
someone said to
Mark: "you know, we
don't actually have
proof that this isn't
going on everywhere
in the world right
now"... and I felt so
good I could even
believe it might be!*

**HOW TO GO ON TOUR
WITHOUT A PUNK BAND...**

In spring of 2002, we announced that that summer various CrimethInc. cells would form do-it-yourself flying circuses and travel the country performing in a variety of settings, with an emphasis on appearing in cities outside the usual anarchist circuit. These tours would make radical perspectives visible again in the wasteland of paranoia that remained in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September, 2001; they would share skills and stories among longtime anarchists and civilians alike; they would offer a chance for a

new generation of potential revolutionaries to "run away with the circus," and in the process become both more experienced in rabble-rousing and more connected to the international web of resistance culture. We sent out a call for others to form circuses of their own and go on similar tours, and organized (well, perhaps that's a strong word for it) a convergence of all the touring groups to take place at the climax of the summer, in Des Moines, Iowa—the center of nothing-ever-happens America.

Here follows a selection of texts we circulated before the tours, to share what skills we already had with other touring groups. We reprint them here in hopes that others might apply them, too, on future anarchist circus or barnstorming or skillsharing tours! After all, if you're going to travel, you might as well engage the world in give and take as you go.

CrimethInc. Folklore/Folkwar Tour Class of 2000 Advice to Upcoming Circus Tours of 2002 *courtesy of Barely Anonymous*

This is a brief introduction to some of the experience my friends and I have had undertaking projects like the ones that will occur this summer, and a short summary of my current ideas about what could be possible this time.

First, one vision of what these traveling circuses might do: my experience on previous such tours, both with bands and performance groups, is that whenever we spent one night in a town, by the time we left we were just barely getting to know all the exciting things going on there that we wouldn't get the chance to explore; on the other hand, when we spent a few days in a town, we often ended up feeling paralyzed and left out, since we didn't know what to do with ourselves

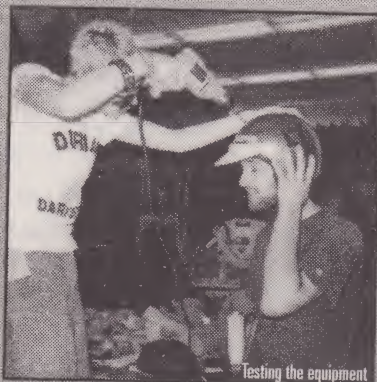
in an alien environment when we weren't focused on performing. Solution: spend two or three days in each town, with different activities planned for each day.

The first day could be the traditional performance/punk show event, since those are always good chances to keep in contact with your community and meet newer people who are just getting involved; the second day could be a day to connect with the creative/activist community, to trade workshops and share skills and resources (circuses should bring some useful knowledge to share, but also can learn more and more to share as they travel from town to town if locals are willing to teach); and the final day could be set aside for doing something in a public space: staging guerrilla theater in Wal-Mart, setting up a strange interactive tool in the park to start conversations with strangers, wheatpasting Main Street in Romulus, Alabama with the kids you taught the recipe the night before.

The three-day approach requires three times as much from the organizers, of course, than the one-night show, so be sure, if you want to try this, that the people organizing the individual events are ready to go the distance. They will know far better than you can what is possible and valuable in their community, so work closely with them in advance to figure out what they should set up and you should prepare for. Also make sure in advance that everything is clear about how food and lodging will be arranged: and if you do think others may join you in the course of your trip (offering a chance to "run away with the circus" is an excellent social service, as long as it doesn't cripple the circus or the escapees' communities...), make sure to provide for this possibility.¹

2002

MENTAL RESOURCES



Think about what the skills you have to share are—especially the unusual ones, ones no one would think of sharing!—and bring what you need to help others pick them up. At the least it couldn't hurt, especially if you're going off the beaten track, to bring the raw materials necessary to show interested young people how to do their first screenprinting, or something like that. That could be a whole day's exciting and worthwhile activity right there. Also, bring your own curiosity, since you'll have constant chances to learn.

Be as prepared as possible to provide for your own needs: if you are traveling in an automobile, for

example, make sure someone knows at least something about car repair. Try to form a team of individuals whose strengths and abilities complement each other, e.g. one who is good at organizing shows and keeping up with them and likes to drive, one who enjoys public speaking and has some expertise in diplomacy, one who perhaps is shy about public performances but can do amazing practical work with her hands and keeps her head in emergencies. At the same time—try to rotate responsibilities as frequently as possible!

CrimethInc. North American Insurrection Tour Class of 2001 Advice to Upcoming Circus Tours of 2002 *by Secret Agent Bartleby*

What is happening with the CrimethInc. Tour this summer is an exercise in imagination, and like any worthwhile adventure will be difficult. Perhaps a few rumors have circulated around the short-lived CrimethInc. North American Insurrection Tour last summer... what happened, what worked, what failed, and what went up in fucking flames. Flames are—after all—what we want.

You are not a rock band on tour

In a band you are traveling with a few people you know, who all have preset roles—"drummer," "singer," "lead guitarist"—who all do a certain thing together, like "play a show." You do this on a regular basis, usually at a "club" or "house." You do this once a day, sometimes twice, and survive by taking a piece of the proceeds at the door or selling "merchandise."

None of this applies anymore.

¹ Note from the Graphic Designer: Despite possible appearances, this piece isn't a horribly incomplete rant—the rest of this it has been cleverly hidden in the grey boxes.

PERFORMANCES

Amber reciting poetry in the tent



Try to utilize as many of the five senses as possible at once, not to mention other faculties; the more the better, as long as the different media don't interfere with each other. Read manifestos backed by mood music performed on the spot; add visual aids, sound effects, appropriate scents if possible. Compose a rock opera to be performed by your puppets, while they toss fortune cookies to the audience. If you want people to join in on the chorus, hold up placards with the lyrics on them. Utilize undercover agents in the audience to keep things coming at people from all sides.

Try utilizing a variety of formats—not just puppet shows and discussion groups. Try interactive games, pull off your whole show as a staged accident in front of the show space as people are arriving unprepared, invent unthinkable religious ceremonies, hold a wedding between corporate and political interests in the middle of the shopping district and then carry off the environment in a coffin right through the Gap.

It's been my experience over and over that it's better to bring a "toolbox" of skits, ideas, and materials to draw upon than one highly evolved organism that will either thrive or perish in each different environment you enter [a punk band is a perfect example of the latter]. Have a fall-back plan, yes—a few of them!—but be able to adjust constantly to circumstances, so as to render your project relevant to any and every space. If you can, arrive in each situation in time to make plans tailored specifically to its possibilities and challenges. Assuming you have the good energy in your group that will be critical to your success, continuous revision and expansion of and experimentation with your projects will give you something exciting to do between shows. By all means brainstorm insanely as you're driving to each event, and practice shouting out the lines to your new skit over breakfast. Bring a notebook of ideas each and talk constantly about how to implement or combine different ones. That said—practice as much as you can in advance. There's no reason not to try things out at home before you leave; you're going to have to shake off that shyness at some point, and a couple disasters ahead of time can only be a blessing in the long run.

Again, in my experience—the best presentations are interactive, but only after a certain atmosphere has been established to ensure that whatever people do together will be different than what they would do "normally." We all need circuses and bands and so on because we depend on such things to snap us out of the expectations and routines that we fall into otherwise. If you can raise anticipation and excitement to a high enough level, people will be ready to do exciting and courageous things themselves—but they're probably counting on you to set the scene. Yes, of course it's bad that people approach these events with a spectator mentality, but like it or not, if that's going to be shaken off, you probably have to

You are going to be traveling with a completely unknown number of people, without any funds, and you will all have no idea what you're doing. This can be utterly fucking exhilarating, but it can also lead down the path to apathy (a path littered by beer cans, I might add!) and inability to actually do anything. In the beginning of your tour, not knowing what you are capable of is an advantage—for example, a member of your merry troupe formerly known primarily as someone with foot rot and great shoplifting skills can let their inner Shakespeare out. However, someone you also thought was a gentle, kind, and caring individual could also let release his inner Mussolini. Things like this will happen.

*That's why it is important to have a plan, although in all likelihood you will light it on fire and throw the ashes out the van window within a few days of beginning your tour. It may not prevent personality problems, but it will at least give both Mussolini and Shakespeare a common goal. A plan sets the tone and timbre of the whole fucking trip, so you should do everything within your power to make it at least an uplifting plan, and a good one. Write a manifesto. An important part of CrimethInc. is inspiration—if you can't inspire yourselves, how do you think you're going to inspire others? Without any plan the tour will devolve into wandering and drinking in short order. Even if the entire group read *Evasion* and realizes the lack of revolutionary potential in drinking, the tour will just devolve into wandering and shoplifting instead, making a mockery your pretensions of doing something extraordinary.*

You know you want to do something historic, but you will have no idea what that will be—at all. The most effective approach is

start the shaking process. Put a bunch of kids in a room together and shout "You're free! Free to do whatever you want! The world is yours, you godlike motherfuckers!!" and they'll probably just talk about who's dating who and when the Tragedy show will be; set yourself on fire, do a wild dervish dance, sing a mad hymn to love and war and then shout the same thing, and the results might be different.

Connect your activities to whatever is going on in the rest of the world; be a news source about the arrestees from the last demonstration or current events in occupied Palestine, spread information about what the I.M.F. actually is (and how that connects to what happened in Argentina), be sure to present interested people with possibilities of what they can do next.

And connect your activities to your own life—this is really important! Draw on whatever unique experiences or stories you have—those are your greatest resource, and the one that you can be certain no one else can provide if you don't. What you do has to be challenging and exciting and involving for you, first of all, if it is going to be for others, so make sure you're doing the things you most need and fear to do.

Try to make sure whatever you do can't easily be placed and classified. DO NOT add more fuel to the fire of popular stereotypes (the myth that CrimethInc. is essentially the religion of traveler kids especially has to be smashed—this isn't about glorifying a certain lifestyle, but subverting all of them, right?). If you wear Carhartt and hop trains, fair enough, there are decent enough reasons to do both those things, but challenge people, surprise them, don't let them brush you off as a recruiter from another social clique: maybe you should consider doing something other than blowing fire. To this end, it would be good to involve people from as far-flung and varying backgrounds as possible. A bunch of punks will probably tend towards starting a d-beat band (or at least a puppet show about drunken pirates), however much they want to do other things; a punk, a folk-artist sculptor, a macrobiotic chef, and an addiction/abuse counselor, on the other hand, might have a hard time doing anything together but unique projects. Try not to limit your ideas to what you have in common, but instead approach everything in a way that brings out the differences and even contradictions within your group. The more ingredients, the more tensions, the sweeter the pie.

to look at your resources and think what the current situation needs, and then try to fucking do it. From our experiences last summer—if you're at a gathering of wild eco-warriors in the woods who all know what "CrimethInc." and "Anarchy" are, but are spending far too much time infighting, maybe a comic musical about a love affair between a "green" and a "red" anarchist would work. If you're in a town where people are complaining that "nothing ever happens," go wheat-pasting with the locals under the cover of night, and make sure to leave the recipe and copies of the posters. If you're stuck with a bunch of pretentious white artists in New York City who recently opened a show space in a working-class Latino neighborhood, have the common decency to fire-bomb their show and drive them out of town. Don't underestimate your abilities: if a fire-bomb is called for by circumstances, then fucking do it!

On the Highway to Heaven or Hell

Put as much time as humanly possible into the places you visit—and be on time. Being on time to a show is utterly impossible when dealing with the logistics of maneuvering train-hoppers, hitch-hikers, vans that break down, shows that last too long, people who get caught shoplifting or arrested throwing tear-gas canisters at police, and so on. It is our job to do the impossible.

To add to earlier recommendations of three-day stays, I would recommend putting at least a whole day between each show as the "traveling day" (regardless of physical distance, which has little to do with traveling time), and having the day before each show devoted to scheming the next show and nothing else. Practically, bring along someone on the tour who knows something about repairing cars, a triple A membership (someone should have it, doesn't have to be person who owns vehicle), and a spare tire. If you have some sightseeing or relaxing to do, devote a whole day to it. Also, if people are feeling exhausted, make sure to have a day of relaxing. At the same time, beware of starting to relax and then forgetting that you're on a world-wrecking tour that is fighting for the survival of life itself. And—if people are too slow, leave them behind. They wanted adventure, right?

Never forget survival: it takes time. Last summer, we crossed the country with nary a cent, thanks to continual dumpster-diving, shoplifting, the Home Depot scam, donations, and the kindness of strangers. Shoplifting will play an ambivalent role as a double-faced dark god in your weeks on the road. You will have no money and be hungry, and like some strange deity shoplifting can provide for many of your material needs in return for your faith and continual participation in its foul rituals. Like any god, though, worshipping shoplifting leads straight to slavery—in a van it becomes just too easy to just drive around new places and shoplift continually, assuming you have the white privilege and the clean clothes to do so. In our last experience, as the tour progressed and we became increasingly bedraggled, shoplifting became (to borrow the words of the Unabomber) "a surrogate activity," one that simulated creative activity and excitement under the pretense of survival while taking up way too much time. Shoplift only when necessary, and try to make money by having benefit shows beforehand, selling books and records, putting out donation jars, robbing banks. Learn how to siphon gas.

Finding Spectators—and Destroying Them

As said before, people who call themselves anarchists and live in a thriving scene are some of the last people that need a "CrimethInc. tour." Anarchist outreach is not about reinforcing

John Q. Anarchist's belief that what he is doing or believes in is just swell and dandy. We could be more useful reaching those people who are discontented with their lives and the world, and fanning the embers of that discontent into flames. Driving people over the edge straight into the abyss, past the point of ever returning to the "normal routine"; that's fucking important. Those people are everywhere—with the possible exceptions of punkhouses and infoshops. They're on street corners at midnight

EMOTIONAL RESOURCES

Positive energy: most of all, you'll need to do this with people you love and believe in and trade inspiration with constantly. It will be that energy that sustains you on your adventures, as well as everyone you come into contact with. Most of the really intense moments and months of performance and intervention that I know about came out of love affairs of one sort or another. At the same time, make sure your love affair isn't too fragile, or you might find yourself in the ashes of your project half way through.

Diplomacy: fuck, this is important. Being cool-headed, ready to talk out conflicts inside and outside your group, not practicing that childish and counter-productive escalation of aggression some people do when arguments break out... without this, you'll be hard-pressed to have a good time or survive challenges. Practice being smart, nice, open to others' perspectives, goal-oriented rather than vindictive and petty. Think hard about whether you're ready to do what it takes to get along with others in all circumstances before you undertake something like this—that is perhaps the most important question. Make sure everyone in your group is thinking about this, not just one babysitter.

Babysitters? That brings us to... responsibility! If you tell people you'll arrive at 5 p.m., be there, at all costs, or else you are doing your part to destroy the d.i.y. community and prove that all these crazy dreams will not work after all. Seriously! A larger project like this depends on the blind trust of a wide number of people; betray that trust, and it'll be twice as hard for people to do something like it next time. Sure, sure, there's always some excuse, but there's always a way to make things work, too. In the d.i.y. world, everything you do you do by virtue of others' generosity and goodwill. Be constantly aware of their needs and feelings. Wash the dishes you use at their houses, clean up your mess, thank them for every favor, be understanding when things go wrong.



ORGANIZING

Programming the drum machine



It seems to me that the wisest way to organize something like this, that involves a lot of people doing independent projects, is according to the "autonomous cell" model. Get together a tight affinity group of people who know how to work well together; be prepared to function on your own in all circumstances. Like a big demonstration, this project will sometimes put people who don't know each other in situations where they have to work together and depend on one another; it's best, in those conditions, that people are organized into small units that can present their needs and intentions to other such groups in a simple fashion, and can work things out for themselves in emergencies. Be prepared, also, to respect and support what other groups are doing, and see diversity as an opportunity for each to reinforce the efforts of the others, not for competition and infighting.

Talk in advance about how to handle some of the disasters that may befall you: interpersonal conflicts, sexual harassment, arrests, financial crises, private tragedies. Things are going to go wrong. Maybe really fucking wrong. Make sure in advance you're as prepared as possible, so this can be a good experience in the long run no matter what.

selling drugs, they're trapped in boring high-schools, they're drinking coffee before going to work.

Many small cities and towns across the U.S. are developing wild and wooly anarchists of the most unlikely stripes. These are the people that I want to do shows for—not the latest anarcho-hipster from Portland, but the kid doing a literature distro from the basement of the church in Appalachia where they hold shows for traveling bands that rarely come. That church deserves to host some guerilla warfare disguised as guerilla theatre! Realize too that some people will be openly hostile to "CrimethInc."—most likely not the police, but other anarchists who fear that "CrimethInc." is on a mission to contest their self-identification as the only true and correct anarchists. Just give them Harbinger #4 and encourage them to read "Infighting the Good Fight"; tell them that the first step to becoming a member of the CrimethInc. Ex-Workers' Collective is to reject the CrimethInc Ex-Workers' Collective.

Some of the best shows of last summer were spontaneous shows done at coffee-houses and public parks, where people

who had never heard of "anarchy," much less "CrimethInc.," were exposed to them and enjoyed themselves with us. If there is some important event going on that requires you to ditch your show—for example, a black man accused of trying to kill a cop in self-defense is going to trial and needs support—always feel free to drop the CrimethInc. act and just help out. From cleaning the dishes at the place you were staying to providing the shock troops for some demonstration, almost every community needs a few productive anarchists to do some task or another. Whatever it fucking takes!

Days of Performances, Nights of Soap

Opera

All sorts of vagabonds, runaways, and others will join on the tour as it continues. Soon you may have multiple cars, be doing shows with people you didn't know, and be more excited yet more exhausted than you ever thought possible. First, greet all with open arms, but be very careful with letting your adventuresome band spiral out of control and lose track of its purpose—revolution! For example, if room in the van becomes scarce, make sure that you don't overload it with people. Obvious points like that are often overlooked. I would personally discourage anyone from joining an ongoing tour unless the current tour feels very comfortable with the person; instead, try to persuade people to form their own tours, if possible.

Try to have large group check-ins, but avoid them devolving into semi-formal meetings. Instead, try to keep the group small enough that you can work out everything face to face as friends, without a ludicrous official facilitator. Any more than about ten people will probably lead to self-destruction, in my opinion. If people desire to join the tour mid-way, you should discuss with everyone already

involved whether they want to travel with this person. Of course, you probably won't find out the true colors of the person till much later in the trip, so it needs to be clear that the whole tour is dynamic and ever-changing, and it may be necessary for people to leave the tour. Don't let problems fester, don't skirt around issues of sexism, racism, boredom, alcoholism, laundry, lack of productivity, and so on. If problems do fester and spiral out of control, always remember that sometimes you have to tear all the maggots out of rotting flesh so it can regenerate.

Your relationships will stretch to the boundaries and probably break. If you have a group of people in a small space going on wild adventures, people in short notice will start mating in all imaginable combinations. Soon, the trip may resemble a syndicated soap opera. Leaders will emerge, with pecking orders, and those on the bottom of the pecking-order will attempt to exterminate each other. These things can be prevented with balanced distribution of authority, and a firm commitment from everyone in the trip not to let their hormones rule their human faculties to such an extent

*Bring exciting ideas (driving games, trails of graffiti to leave in every neighborhood, whatever) for in between performances and events, too, so things will always be fun. Not a single moment should feel like work.

*Don't be intimidated about everything you don't know! Someone does. Just ask. A band can give you a contact to book a show in that town, a volunteer at the infoshop has the experience you need with paper mache, a relative knows how to build a loft for your van.

*If you have the chance, take your circus to places no one goes! There's already a lot of good things going on in Philadelphia, and a fair bit of knowledge being shared there; and everyone knows New York is painfully glutted with cool stuff. Go to West Virginia, to Maine, to Oklahoma, to Kansas, to places where no popular bands bother to go. People there are ready to rock, too, when energy comes in from somewhere—and without all the stress and distraction of being in a "cool town," they might be better equipped to focus on doing good things with the inspiration they pick up.

*There are plenty of records of earlier experiments like the ones you're undertaking. It couldn't hurt to look back at them for ideas about what might go wrong or right. One (of a million) examples is the book *Autonomea* (and, er, *Bloodlink*) published a few years back about the Nomadic Festival tour. Better yet, read about "real" circuses, street performers, and hobos from a century ago, to unearth forgotten secrets

that took generations to work out and shouldn't be denied to new hearts.

*For fuck's sake, you herd of idiots, *don't needlessly alienate*. A banner that says "Work is for Bored People" might be exhilarating for a crowd of rebellious teenagers, but to a gathering of older people it might appear that you're flaunting the privileges they don't have. Another example—if you're performing at a macho hardcore show, unless there's no alternative, try to find a way to tap into whatever radical tendencies are present (you know, "we mosh because we love to be intimate with other boys, because it makes us feel alive—the same way I felt that night I..."), rather than just telling everyone they're a bunch of dumb sheep. The latter tactic is only useful in emergencies, when a line has to be drawn immediately so the people in the middle will see just how important it is that they distance themselves from the ones you are picking as opponents. We had to do that with Earth Crisis, maybe we have to do it with the Socialist Workers' Party, too, but there's no fucking reason to make everyone our enemies. Show the people you interact with that anarchism is about mutual support and respect for differences and all that jazz. (OK, ha, can you tell now that the first sentence of this paragraph was intended to be ironic?)

Above all, good luck. You'll learn on your own skin what you need to, if you're ready to go through the fire. See you at the conclusion of all this in Iowa—Imagine all the stories we'll have to share with each other there!

that the tour is destroyed. Most problems shouldn't wait for the next group meeting. Waiting for the next "Group Meeting" is like waiting for "The Revolution." Instead, at the moment a problem begins, all those involved should talk to each other about it face-to-face. If it's best for people to separate, it should just be done. There's room enough in this world for a million tours, CrimethInc. or otherwise.

CrimethInc.: The Legend

The strangest part of a CrimethInc. tour is that people will continually ask you "Who wrote the book?" or "What's the next book?" and, most frequently, "I don't believe that quote on the back of the *Evasion* book!" It's frustrating, but simply be honest while maintaining the mysterious nature of crimethinking: "I don't know who wrote the book, but it sure as hell wasn't me—and goddamnit, I didn't write that fucking quote either!" There's no need to give the full names, addresses, and phone numbers of every person ever involved in a CrimethInc. project, or at the other extreme add extraneously to the CrimethInc. mythology (hopefully the tours will do that merely by existing!). As independent autonomous cells are producing CrimethInc. propaganda and actions, no one actually does know exactly who did what and who is planning for their next project. Tell them about your life, how you got involved with revolution, what your next projects are. Then ask them about their lives, what they love and hate about CrimethInc., and what their next projects are. Be very open—anyone can use the CrimethInc. logo for anything, and anyone can distribute CrimethInc. literature for whatever purpose they have without any need to contact the CrimethInc. Central High Command Committee for Decentralization or e-mail Paul F. Maul. CrimethInc. isn't a logo, it's a challenge, a mood, a moment. If you need it, use it. If not, don't. Quite simple, really.

After the Tour

The tours are happening for multiple reasons, and everyone is going for their own. What is important is that these tours be used to build something even greater for the future. The tours should help strengthen bonds within our own communities, and build alliances with new ones. We don't need just another list of contacts for booking shows, an anarchist version of *Book Your Own Fucking Life*. We need fellow revolutionaries, lovers, fighters, dreamers, and friends. These friendships that are being built should allow us to do even greater projects nationally and even internationally. Our tour last year went out with the express purpose of helping decentralize Harbinger distribution (a plan that was cancelled post-tour, too!), but in the process we made many allies, nearly died in a desert, inspired people to make their own CrimethInc. flyers, websites, and so on... we also threw donuts at the cops, barely escaped an orgy, met astounding people, met people we wish we never laid eyes on, were brutally assaulted at a coffee-shop, put on musicals despite our inability to sing in key, hated each other, loved each other, and in the end went our separate ways unto even greater things. Some of the people on the last tour now live in a collective house, work together on a garden, have started writing poems and books together, and beyond. We'll destroy the whole world together!

We are the modern day refugees of Louis and Clark, who, turning our backs on their quest to map out the wilderness for exploitation, now turn the wreckage of American civilization into a new wilderness. Let's remember what we see, the strange tribes we encounter, our adventures, our knowledge. In the end, through our travels, we shall collectively know the United States in all its majesty and all its madness as well, if not better, than the government itself does. It is always useful to know one's enemy. With love in our hearts, AK-47s in our hands, and a new world being born beneath our very noses... aim beyond the stars, Agent Bartleby¹

¹ Note from the Editor: My comrade took this temporary nom de guerre in honor of Herman Melville's famous character, *Bartleby the Scrivener*, a clerk who moved into his office and refused to move out, because the night he wrote it we all broke into his workplace to use those empty offices for ourselves to get things done. When I was a little kid, adults read me stories of the goblins and fairies who would come out at night and mess with things while humans slept—I didn't figure out until that night, with my feet on the desk of my friend's boss and my texts-in-progress on his computer, that "goblins and fairies" was just storybook shorthand for—*anarchists!*

...AND WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE DID

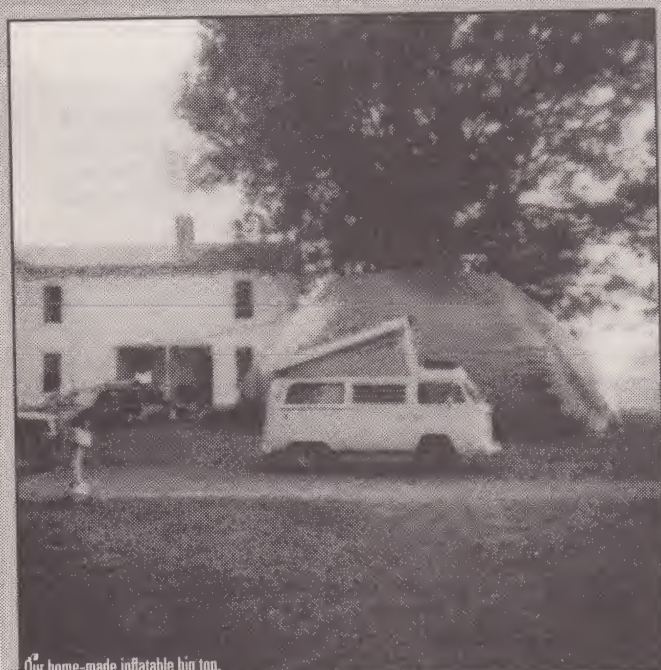
Part I: The Tour

So what did we do? How did it go? I can only speak for the circus I toured with, but we had an amazing month. It started out just two of us, myself and my friend Mark, an inventor and yoga student with whom I have been having adventures since we met as boy scouts nearly two decades ago; by the end of the tour, we were eight, including a spoken word artist, a Poi expert organizing for protests against the International Monetary Fund, a freestyling M.C. of amazing capabilities, and two specialists in the "anarchist ice cream" scam. We began with a 200 pound d.i.y. drum machine, among other instruments and props; by the tour's end, standard drumsets seemed foreign. We finished assembling and testing our 38-foot-diameter inflatable circus tent only hours before our first show, for 200 4-H campers in rural West Virginia; we also performed at a wedding for many hundreds of guests, for four people behind

an art gallery, and for mixed audiences of bearded anarchists, amiable parents, and restless children in assorted public parks, theaters, infoshops, and basements. We learned how to shut off the gas at fast food franchises, and made a 'zine with the instructions, and various other texts we'd composed during the tour, to give away. We taught the radical history of puppetry with puppet shows, we screamed out manifestos and recited original-composition children's stories to ancient folk songs. We held round table discussions to introduce anarchist ideas to teenagers—and their families. We got heckled by punk rock clowns with clown paint tattooed on their faces, who thought we weren't circusish (or drunk?) enough.

Other circuses had more mixed results. One disappeared, one had to cancel practically its whole tour, another group arrived in Des Moines having driven all the way from the West coast with no licensed drivers in a quickly dying automobile. The Northeastern circus arrived with more than twenty members, many of them newly joined, and mentioned that many others had passed in

CREATING OUR OWN MYTHOLOGY—MYTH #1 CIRCUSES ARE LIKE COCKROACHES—IF YOU'VE SEEN ONE, WATCH OUT.



Our home-made inflatable big top.

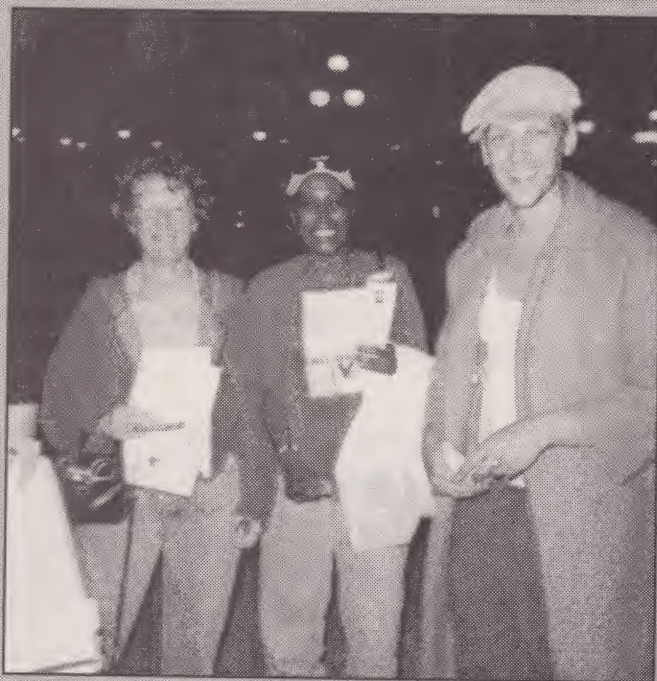
From our first show in West Virginia, the totality of the CircusTour was just a myth—but it was a myth we spread. Every night we would remind the audience, not to mention ourselves, that in six locations across the United States, six circuses were performing, skillsharing, or at least stuck by the side of the road swearing. It was something to think about now and then; but none of that seemed real until our convoy came to a weary halt in the parking lot of the campsite, a state park in Indianola, Iowa.

The group I was traveling with included contributors to several written projects published under the CrimethInc. moniker. We assumed, but more accurately feared, that we knew of the majority of active CrimethInc. affiliates.

So when we hopped out of our cars at camp and were greeted as welcome strangers by a member of the NE circus group, she may not have known that it made my entire day. As more and more circuses arrived, our fears dissolved. No group was less gorgeous, inspiring and excited than the next. We began to figure out that each group had arrived with the same fears as us. As the week spun on we were amazed at the differences in the groups, each one a strange planet with its own culture, concerns, aesthetics, tactics.

Since I returned home, the myth of all I experienced has been more important than ever. I am back in a familiar place, now feeling there is a thread behind my dreams and activities that is present in one hundred more places than I imagined. I have a feeling that every minute I spend cooking up ideas (or dumpstered veggies) is multiplied. Now I have to do my best to keep up with the brilliance of a new universe—not play small or shy so as not to scare one away.

DESTROYING THEIR MYTHOLOGY—MYTH #2 URBAN AMERICA IS ROME—AND IT MAY BE BAD IN HERE—BUT BEYOND THE WALLS LURK BACKWARDDS, BUSH-DWELLING PROTO-HUMAN BARBARIANS WHO VOTE FOR W!



I have harbored a version of that myth, even cared for it as my own. But during our circus travels this summer I saw it publicly shamed and exiled.

Our circus elected to avoid large cities in favor of smaller cities and towns. We also tried staying in towns one or two extra days to share what we had and to learn what we could. What we learned is a list too long to recount of the most breathtaking nobodies in the world. Families with children, sharing direct action tactics and spreading information on community building that will let them quit their jobs and feel like their children are cared for. Young kids running would-otherwise-be-disposable punk houses, with long-term plans to fix roofs and stop developers. Rural West-Virginians who taught us rookies a lesson or two in anarchy and pet care.

Backwards indeed! I realized that Power has a vested interest in everyone believing everyone else to be hopelessly stupid. Isn't it obvious, for instance, that Power could have chosen any number of presidential puppets, puppets that middle class intellectuals would think well (enough) of, handsome and intelligent-seeming puppets?

But no, in an absolutely brilliant moment of inspiration Power stopped short. They choose George Bush—that lovable pooch—to entertain the small minority who, through misinformation, elected him. Then they sit back and watch the rest become crippled with despair because a "majority"

(as implied by the media, and the sheer fact that he is president) of their fellow citizens must drink him up like the milkshake he is.

"Obviously," smacks the regular at the coffee shop, "this is a nation of imbeciles!"

What this nation is, is a vast majority who feels unrepresented by and simultaneously fearful of a majority, actually a minority, who only appear to be represented. It's easy to catch that myth because it is broadcast so thickly by the media that an antenna in your liver could pick it up (that's fucking true by the way!). It's easy to keep because it helps justify that second latté and another blasé political analysis. [God, I used the accent-e button twice in one sentence!]

But out here, in America itself, we saw this myth to be one more façade, a false front disguised as a castle wall. When we storm our rulers' gates, when we really do it instead of muttering amongst ourselves about it, our fellow-serfs will be at our sides.

and out of their group in the course of the tour. The Southeastern circus started out their pre-tour organizing as a group of ten, and arrived in Des Moines as a twosome able to do the work of twenty.

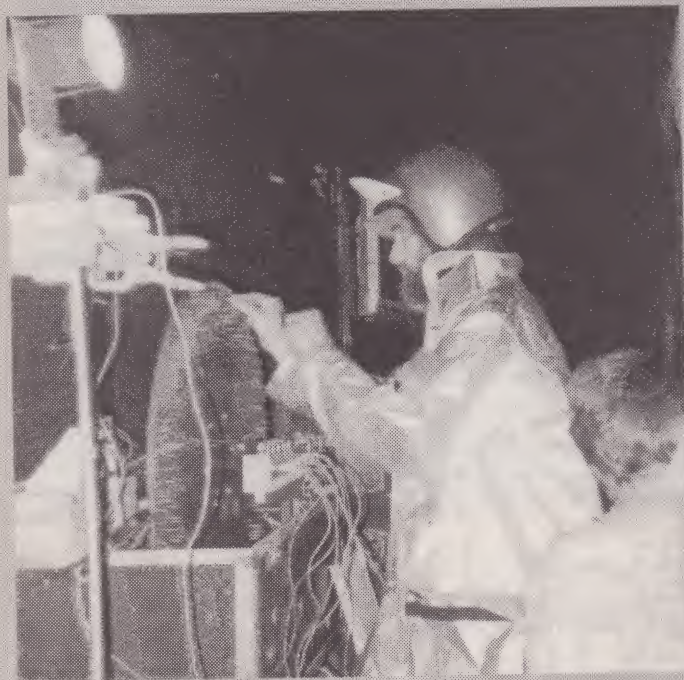
It was definitely in our favor that our particular circus group was built on the bedrock of my friendship with Mark and our experience doing such things together. It took the pressure off the others who joined us, and established a positive, energized atmosphere that colored everything we did or encountered. Our best shows were definitely the ones in the less-traveled regions; in cities like Chicago, people are so jaded that it's hard to get them to take booking a show seriously even for a well-established touring group, but just a few hours away in Springfield, locals roll out the red-and-black carpet for anybody that comes through.

As I mentioned, we finished building our famous circus tent, having no idea if it would work or not, less than twenty-four hours before our first show—and then started wondering what we'd do at the show. We wrote most of our skits in the next few days, struggling to compose lines on the way to the following shows. This improvisation and intense ongoing development gave our early performances an immediacy that could create real magic ("OK, this is a poem I wrote and memorized one hour ago—") and a disorganization that could totally sabotage that (imagine me stopping in the middle of that poem, mind blank, just when everyone's pulse was beginning to quicken, and finally being forced to search for my notebook). It was indeed a lot of fun to spend every day's drive helping each other to memorize our lines, but I imagine that if we hadn't already been tried-and-tested working companions the extra stress

of this would have been one more straw on the proverbial camel's back. I wish we'd done more general preparation in advance, and then done the improvising around details and additions as we went. At the end of the tour, when we were finally really good at everything we were doing, I regretted we hadn't started out that good and improved from there... but, you know, I'm a perfectionist. The southeastern group prepared a great deal in advance, and did little improvising, while the northeastern group did little else.

Was it all a success? Over forty cities hosted radical events of some kind over a period of less than a month, whether that meant a hundred people dancing naked together or six kids talking about what the alternatives to college might be. Everyone ended up with a lot more skills and experience to be applied next time, and the sheer

If the tour our circus undertook drove anything home for me, it is how important it is for us anarchists to be visible in every community we pass through, how important it is for us to travel and trade information and inspiration openly with everyone we can. Punk rock shows and touring bands were crucial for radicalizing the demographic I come from, and although not everyone can or should be a punk or a traveler, we should never underestimate the strategy dissidents have used for centuries: roving bands of entertainers and organizers crisscross the land, planting seeds and conveying information from one entrenched resistance group to another—in person, the way human beings have always interacted best. Yes, for the last time, the majority of us at any given point should be located in a community we know and belong to, so we can have the stability and



Our first show after the wedding is on a hilltop between the forests and farmlands outside Wheeling, West Virginia. It's a far cry from those lifeless rituals that big city shows can be at their most cliquish—a pre-punk, post-apocalypse scene in which a motley

crew of rural folk mill around tables of free food set out on the gravel road, confused proto-skinheads sit in a field debating patriotism with teenage whiz-kid anarchists, and a solitary maniac can be heard playing scorched-earth electric blues from the barn. We run four hundred feet of extension cords all the way up the hill to inflate our giant d.i.y. circus tent, and one of our hosts four-wheels our equipment up in a big country truck. After the show, Norma, the matriarch responsible for this venue, known by young people in the area for sometimes appearing at shows in her dominatrix ensemble, drives it back up to help us get our stuff.

"I knew y'all would want to be on this hilltop. My daughter said you'd want the barn, but I knew it, that you'd choose the hill. This hilltop here, this is a special place. You know, I get those corporations coming to me every week, telling me they want to buy all these trees off me—and I say, you listen: every single tree here, every blade of grass is a living thing, and you're not touching a one of them! They're not used to that, you know, I'm probably the only fifty-one year old black woman they met who owns hundreds of acres of land, and they think I'm going to turn it over easy, but—well, I'll tell you what. I don't want you to think I'm crazy,

fact that this happened hopefully gave hope to others that their own grandiose schemes might also be possible. And—if future tours are easier and better thanks to the experience we gained, then every problem, every misadventure suffered this past summer, will have been worthwhile.

commitment to build support networks and long-term projects—but some of us should be out there in the world, too, building geographical links as well as local ones, making possibilities visible where they weren't before.

Part II: The Convergence

If the tours had ups and downs, the convergence at the end was something else entirely. None of us have really tried to capture it in writing or words since; we all seem to agree that the joy of the experience went beyond anything mere words could capture.

We gathered at a campsite a couple dozen miles from Des Moines, and alternated activities for ourselves there with activities in downtown Des Moines. Staying out in nature, most of us sleeping outside, helped us feel connected to the earth and focused on ourselves and each other; after a few

disappointed by), a majority of the people there had arrived after weeks of traveling with projects of their own—and even those who hadn't been on tour had usually had some crazy adventures trying to get out to convergence, whether they were riding their bikes across the country or hitchhiking. This meant that the spectatorship, and attendant dichotomy between organizers and onlookers, that mars too many gatherings, was absent from the beginning: everyone there had something to share, and knew it.

This created an atmosphere of total participation. Everything worked because everyone was down to contribute their share of both practical and creative input: fuck the books of theory, this was anarchy in action! The fact that there was no formal organizing, and thus no set distinction between organizers and organizees, made it easy

but I have a thing for dirt. Dirt—you know, huge trees grow from this stuff, isn't that a miracle! That's not something to sell to anybody, no way. We come up here on this hill, we have dinner on this hill, watch the sunset, drink up here—I have sex on this hill, I come up here and get naked, and look at the stars! I say—you haven't lived until you've felt the wind in your crotch under the stars! Well now—y'all are anarchists, I hear. Tell me, what's anarchy about?"

Days later, in Springfield, Illinois, we set up the tent in the parking lot next to a community space just opened by our new friends here. Most of the people who come to the show and the skillshare the next day are significantly older than us—many of them are part of an "unjobbing" group that meets here to trade skills for cutting back expenses and escaping from the employee/consumer cycle. This is really inspiring to see, to be reminded that we're not the only generation engaged in the struggle for liberation—still, we're a little anxious about how our more militant masks-and-molotovs rhetoric will go over.

But just as it happened when we performed for a mix of teenage punks, college radicals, facially tattooed anarchists, nicely dressed parents with young children,

and local journalists in Athens, Ohio, and they all seemed equally entertained by our antiauthoritarian theater and rhetoric—just as it reputedly happened when Stef and Ben performed their puppet tutorial on molotov-making in a Louisville public park, and the mothers present sent their children away while continuing to watch avidly themselves—these women and men turn out to be thrilled to hear about how anarchists fought the pigs back in Quebec City, to learn direct action techniques they can apply locally, to cheer poetry celebrating full-scale insurrection. It's almost unnerving. We were wrong, Mark confides to me in the truck afterwards, to fall for the propaganda in the papers and on television about our fellow U.S. citizens: people everywhere in this country are fed up with business as usual, desperate for adventure and intrigue in their own lives, suspicious at the very least of the powers that be—if not already eager to work towards their demise. All that's lacking are approachable, supportive local faces of revolt, and the secret army will start to come out of hiding—we just have to show our confidence in what we're doing, our certainty that it is normal and neighborly to want the utter destruction of capitalism and capitulationism, and everyone can drop their masks.

days there, we were in tune enough with the land and climate that the changing weather seemed to express our own moods back to us.

Unlike just about every other conference or convergence I've been to (and, frequently, been

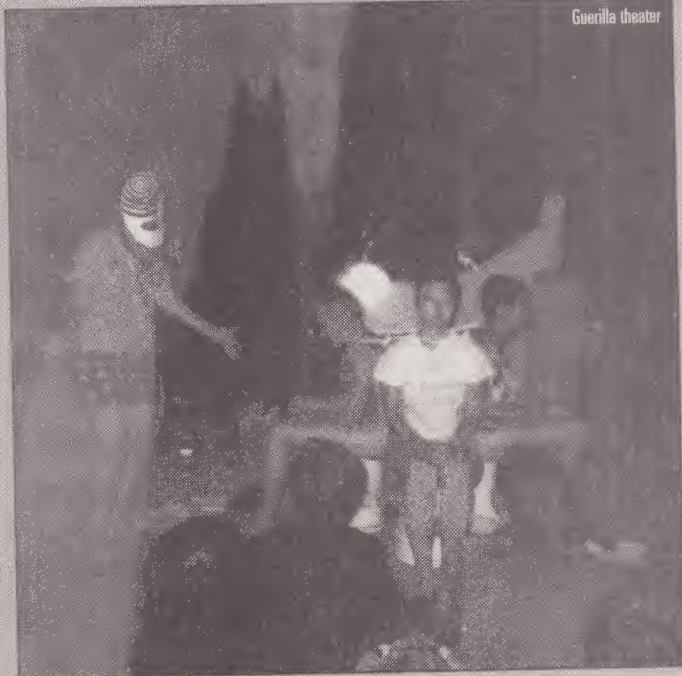
to avoid any barriers to participation like hierarchy or laziness. When we got there, nothing had been planned out for the coming days; but within hours, there were events scheduled, fliers for promotion being copied and distributed, meetings taking place, tasks picked and handled. Every day we

met at noon in a circle, to discuss what we would all like to do, and how things were going; people volunteered to be in groups that handled the acquisition of food and cooking, which went surprisingly smoothly (if always a little behind schedule, as is customary everywhere outside the corporate pale)—and there was always enough to eat, somehow. When it came to performances and workshops, almost everyone had something to offer, and we could have gone on forever listening to and learning from each other. The supportive atmosphere this created made it easy for people

Four days ago in Minneapolis I took a long walk along the railroad tracks. I crawled up a bridge abutment and sat down to be alone and watch trains. My head rested against one of the trusses that made up the bridge. From that foreshortened perspective I could see the huge concrete beam flex as it bore weight. Flexible concrete! That's the way the way life has been lately. And now, in Des Moines, concrete is practically runny. It seems that no plan could fail here, and we test that theory voraciously. Our days are full of plans, discussion and performance. Our nights: ecstatic dancing, singing and music, all with a fever usually associated with bible belt tent revivals—but without the god, illegal races—but without the ego the most triumphant punk shows—but without the drink, cult groups—but without the charismatic leader... should I go on? Last night we saw a white rainbow at midnight and the evening had

just begun
There is a meteor shower this week. The moon sets around one, leaving a crystal mid-western sky, black and cool. We lie on our backs watching meteors so huge they leave glowing trails hanging in our minds. All of this before a black backdrop with billions and billions of ideas.

From a postcard sent from one circus participant at the convergence to his relatives



Thursday night, an informal, unexpected drum circle began under the shelter in the middle of the campsite, and instead of dying down after a few minutes it just kept gathering and gathering momentum, until all of us were dancing

or beating out rhythms, and one by one we felt the atmosphere change: magic appeared in the air, it was suddenly like we were living a dream. People began singing or screaming, spinning and spitting fire, spontaneously yelling out poetry that was lost in the noise now bigger than all of us, like that noise some of us had heard in Quebec when thousands tore down the street signs to make percussion instruments. At some moments, we were all singing together, and it was intoxicating to hear in our ears the feeling of tribal unity already thrilling our hearts. Soon, dancers began taking off their clothes, until a number of women and men were dancing naked, which felt absolutely natural and unaffected. At this moment, I looked over and saw, at the edge of the circle, two men from the nearby neighborhood, standing and watching, beers balanced on their paunches as if they were at a football game. Looking back at my fellow dancers, I marveled that we had created a space so safe that boys and girls who had been terrorized all their lives by the culture of insecurity and fear could dance and sing naked and free without fearing each other's gaze—or the gaze

who I think would never have come forward in another environment to do so; it also made it much easier to be a creative or vocal person, because you didn't have to fear that you were hogging the spotlight.

The head count at the daily circles hovered over thirty and under one hundred. I think altogether, counting all the people who were part of the group at some point between the beginning and the end, that probably a little over one hundred and fifty people came in and out of the community

staying at the campsite. This meant that by the end of the event, even though some of us (like me, for example, believe it or not!) had arrived knowing almost no one, we'd all gotten to know many or most of our companions. It was a perfect environment for getting to know others quickly: there was a lot to do together that really opened people up, and a common understanding that we were there to build friendships and community. Incidentally—I've been in many "radical" environments in which people were supposed to feel validated and secure enough to be open to receiving serious constructive criticism, but this was the only one in which the love in the air was palpable enough for me to feel that such a thing could really work.

What did all this mean for The Struggle? Traditional uptight class war anarchists might not think that

us of how beautiful life can be and pushes us to push for that at the same time as it helps us purge the bitterness of unsatisfying survival from our weary systems. I know witnessing this kind of energy for the first time left a deep impression many of the locals who were there, some of whom did in fact quit their jobs and transform their lives immediately thereafter. The connections we made with each other, the skills and ideas and inspiration and hope and faith we exchanged, will make us infinitely more dangerous to the capitalist beast. In those hours when we entered Des Moines with all our fearless, unfetterable energy, dancing in the middle of intersections and starting serious political conversations with strangers, I could almost imagine that all it would take to change the world would be for us to start together in this one city, expanding our numbers every day as we

of outsiders with no context for what we were doing, and no commitment to respect. That safety was a show of our strength together—that we could not only make magical spaces, but also knew we were secure in them together, come what (or who) may.

Driving up en mass to Des Moines from the campsite Friday evening, our convoy of cars stopped at a corporate supermarket to use homemade coupons to pick up vast quantities of vegan ice cream, which we gave away on the streets downtown a few minutes later. As we were waiting in the parking lot for everyone to get ready to go, dancing to the music on someone's car stereo and enjoying Joe's freestyling ("here we are in the place to be, forty one anarchists and me"), the manager came out to tell us that he "appreciated our business" (ha!) but we "had to get moving." Joe answered him smoothly in freestyled rhymes—something the guy was totally unprepared to deal with! He retreated into the supermarket, and the lot was ours.

That night we descended upon downtown Des Moines in several small groups—some

a few days like this could make a difference one way or the other, but I see it so very differently. Tasting the world we want to live in, living it, is an antidote for all the misery and powerlessness of the world we're trying to escape: this taste gives us something to fight for and stay alive for, it reminds



went individually, from door to door, starting conversations with locals about radical politics, with surprising success; others paraded and played drums; others looked for a good place to set up our d.i.y. drum machine, climbing up lampposts in

reveled publicly in our love of life and each other, and push slowly across the country, transforming every intersection, every interaction, every city as we went.

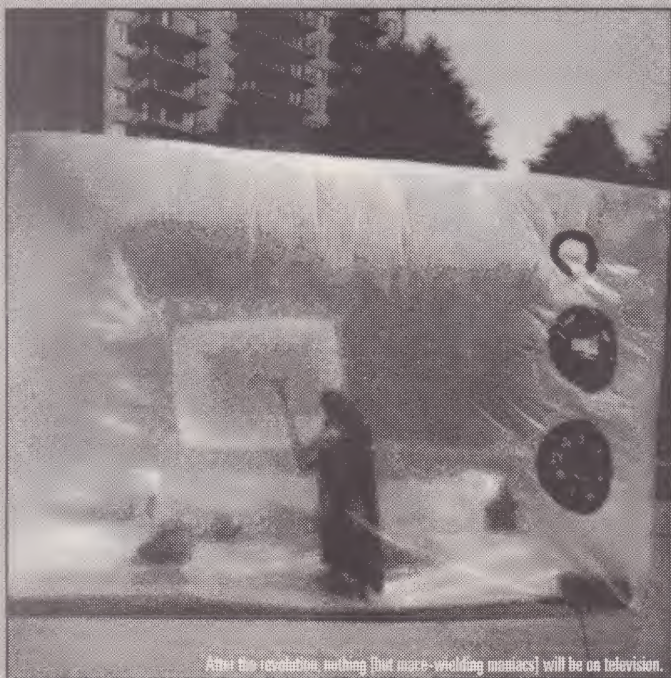
Hey Y'all,

Let's have another circus tour! If we do, I promise I'll have my lines memorized better—and I'm already working on a teleprompter for 2004! Also, I'll remember not to run out of gas. And Fluffy, please remember not to leave my gas cap on the top of the truck. And you—motherfucker in the BMW—remember to swerve two thin inches to the right so my gas cap doesn't smash into a hundred bits right before my teary eyes.

I'll remember to shave my butt, too, so I'll feel more comfortable about shucking down. And I'll do some Nordic-Track or something beforehand, so my little heart can keep up with my Big Heart when the NE circus performs. Yo NE, y'all are gonna do that thing again right?! For real though, NE told me they'd do it again but they'll be using body doubles for all the nudie scenes—so maybe I'll just bring my strap-on butt.

And can we get a committee together? We seriously need a better name than "The Convergence"—something with a "Z" in it, I say. One day it will get so large that it'll break free of the "DIY community" and spread to the "I'll-go-DI-for-someone-else-to-get-some-money-so-you-will-come-DI-for-me community." I know it's still a few years out, but we might want to talk about charging \$150 at the gate so newcomers can have the awesome experience of being as broke as those mythic pioneers of old were when they arrived.

When circus tour finally eats itself enough times to be fat and safe, we can sell the event, and its new Z-Name, to Fluffy. By that time he'll be rich off the six dollars he invested in the market instead of buying me a new gas cap. Fluffy and I will stand in the skybox looking out over our minions. I'll say, "Fluffy, things are getting a little out of hand out there." Then, in a desperately nostalgic move, we'll hire security guards to kick everyone's asses. Fucking kids!



After the revolution, nothing (but more-wielding minims) will be on television.

search of a working outlet. Suddenly, unexpectedly, all the groups converged, and a spontaneous Reclaim the Streets broke out in the middle of the bar district! A rhythm, reminiscent of the one from the preceding night, was struck up on the mailbox and found-object percussion on hand, wild dancing began, and soon a woman, towering on stilts, was blowing fire in the middle of the street. Locals on their way to the bars stopped, amazed, and some began to dance with us; a man tried to seize the U.S. flag that some of us were happily trampling, but was

backed down by cool-headed kids while the other locals, surprisingly, looked on in disapproval of his macho stupidity—even in this post-September 11 world, they didn't mind us stomping on the flag, as long as we were smiling!

Stepping back, gasping for breath from the dance, I realized that our numbers had magically doubled. We had pulled off one of the most successful Reclaim the Streets actions I've witnessed, by sheer accident!

Saturday late at night, just before I went out to sleep, I was saying goodnight to my friends in the barn, when I noticed a young man bedding down with them who was wearing a cow costume for warmth in that chilly night. Double-taking, I realized it was the local guy in the Dr. Who shirt who had run into us in downtown Des Moines the night before, having no former exposure to punk or anarchism, and joined us in the street party! Then I recognized him as one of the individuals who had participated in that day's discussions. It turned out he had called off working for the weekend and come to camp out with us, avidly learning all he could and joining in our activities! Walking to my sleeping bag, I wondered if others like him—or perhaps: how many!—were among our numbers, in other corners of the campsite; and wondered why we'd all waited so long to make a space like this where people could

Hey, let's not have another circus tour! Let's cultivate the connections we made. Let's spread the myth in the twinkling of our eyes and the poetry of ripped off zines. Let's allow the impossible magnitude of our experience to force us to be better storytellers. Let's remember what is possible in our lives, so we'll have that to think about during moments when nothing seems possible.

Most of us left Des Moines saying "let's do this again." I said it too, and goddamnit, I meant it. But for me "doing this again" is not necessarily about converging in Iowa, traveling "circuses," puppet theaters, or even midnight rainbows. This was about swallowing deep and committing to the shakiest-sounding idea I had heard of in a long while (hard to imagine from this perspective). Doing it again will be the same.

So let's not make a magic potion out of all this, a set of instructions that we swallow again hoping to get just as big. Rather, let's think of new plans that are as beautiful,

maniacal and impossible as the one we just pulled off. After all, if that convergence taught me anything, it's that what we ask for, we get... so long as we ask for everything!

Loving, and missing, and still with you all, Mark



join us and experience for themselves what we meant when we said freedom!

During Joe's freestyling workshop on the grass downtown on Sunday, the local homeless men who had walked up to see what we were doing felt comfortable enough to treat us to some of their rhymes.

Returning to the campsite from the workshops downtown, I saw ten, then fifteen great fireballs explode into the air at once, as Stef and Jane led their firebreathing workshop.

Sunday night, after the formal performances were over, when people were shooting off firecrackers and dancing and singing together and spirits were so high it felt as if we'd left the bad old days for good—just a few minutes before a rainbow appeared to us all in the middle of the night, to confirm that we had entered fairyland by sheer triumph of camaraderie—someone said to Mark: "you know, we don't actually have proof that this isn't going on everywhere in the world right now"... and I felt so good I could even believe it might be!

At the final circle, on Monday before we went downtown to liberate a block for one more afternoon, we spontaneously began sharing poetry, songs, confessions with each other,



Impromptu branding at the campsite

celebrating each other and the time we'd shared. It was a space in which all of us felt safe enough to be vulnerable and passionate and naked before each other, and the beautiful things that came out were breathtaking. It felt as if we could go on forever, reveling in that trust and freedom, like we should just put down roots in that space and plant gardens in that field and live there together as one clan, all in love.

DOWN WITH REVIEWS!

After the show in Sarajevo, we split up into little groups to stay in the small apartments of different locals. Rob, Stef, and I went with the tall, older guy to his place, high up in an apartment complex overlooking the river. From that height, we could gaze down upon the snowy rooftops of many different centuries of beautiful architecture—and upon some of the wreckage and ruins left from the war, still waiting to be cleared away these years later.

As usual, I was mute, Stef was withdrawn, and Rob was self-absorbed, so we didn't make particularly good company for our host. He was a few years older than me, sociable but serious, with lines already carved into his face; he'd spent his life here, and since the early 1980's he'd followed the invention and extrapolation of punk rock at varying distances, depending on the political climate. We were the foreigners coming through from far away, so he was hoping we'd have stories to tell, new bands to play him, perspectives to trade on older bands—but after three months of non-stop tour, and with another tough two months ahead, we just wanted to be left alone.

At the show I'd received a deep gash in my forehead which had only just stopped bleeding—many if not most of the kids in attendance had grown up in refugee camps in the middle of Europe's worst ethnic conflict in decades, so it wasn't strange they'd express their frustration in extremely violent dancing. I'd been making my way into the middle of the crowd as I sang, to try to break up some of the aggressive energy, when someone's fist accidentally struck me. I still remember standing there pointing to the blood streaming off my face, screaming "look at this! look! is this what you want?"—and the kids staring back at me, as if to say they were sorry, but it was beyond their control. Now I was in the bathroom, cleaning the last crusts of blood off my brow and checking to see how the new safety pin tattoo on my chest was healing, and Stef was putting out our sleeping bags on the couch. Our host, therefore, was trying to engage Rob in conversation.

He was going through his records, trying to figure out what Rob was interested in—"you like Casper Brotzmann Massaker? Einstürzende Neubauten?"—but Rob was at least a decade younger and didn't know any of these bands. "Throbbing Gristle?" Finally, it became too uncomfortable for me to listen to them misunderstanding each other, and I stuck my head out of the bathroom to nod encouragingly at this last one. "Aha, yes, I have Psychic TV too—" he began, but with my voice thrashed all I could do was nod

my head, so pretty soon I gave up again in vexation and retreated to the bathroom to brush and floss my teeth¹.

He gave Rob a try once more, with some newer bands: "How about Korn? Do you like Korn?" At this, Rob made a face: "No, I don't really like them." Korn? I could read in his expression, *you like Korn? Everyone knows they suck!*

I was done in the bathroom, and tried to make my way past them to lurk inconspicuously by the window; but our host, finally weary of trying to squeeze water from the stone that Rob was, followed me to it. "This direction," he explained to me, as we looked out, "was the front, the fighting, just a few hundred meters away."

I followed his gesture out into the night. "This meant that I had electricity, here, when the rest of the city did not. I had radio equipment, so I could pick up the international radio shows, and that was when I heard this new music coming out of England and the U.S., bands like Korn, Tool. I was interested. I would tape their songs from the radio and sit here and listen to them as the shooting was going on down there."

I could only nod, still, and so he wished me a good sleep and went to bed. For Rob, Korn was a terrible MTV rock band marketed to adolescent boys to cash in on their gawky angst and antagonism. For our host, their music had been his only connection to sanity in a nation gone crazy with violence and hatred; their songs had been a secret world he had discovered and retreated to in order to survive when everyone around him was killing or dying.

A half-decade ago, in the introduction to the reviews in *Inside Front* #11, I speculated that one could compose a song that, like Ice-9 in Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*, would transfigure everyone who heard it, touching off a chain reaction that would spread around the world: a total revolution. At the time, I was engrossed in the struggle to write such a song; my own life had been utterly transformed by a handful of songs, and outdoing them—making songs which might utterly transform the cosmos itself—was my consuming obsession. A year or so after composing that introduction, I read a piece in an issue of *Al Burian's Burn Collector* in which he confessed that there had been a time when he had believed the same thing was possible. Punk rock songs had so affected him that he figured all it would take for everyone to be changed as he had been

(a world of Al Burians... a terrifying thought, really) would be for these songs to be played everywhere—that was why good music was banned from the radio, why the media only broadcast pap and drivel (it was, after all, the 1980's). Accordingly, he set out to play punk rock, to spread it around the world.

Later, after years of band practice, tours, incandescent instants punctuating grueling, disappointing months, Al was sitting in a car, stuck in traffic jam, listening to corporate radio out of sheer boredom—when one of those old songs came on. He'd long since lost the brash illusions of his youth, but it had been a slow, imperceptible process—now, suddenly, his one-time dream was coming true, but as the most horrible of disappointments. He looked around at the fed up, glassy-eyed people in neighboring cars—it was entirely possible that they were listening to the same station he was, and nothing was happening, nothing at all.

What does that mean, then? Is punk rock powerless to change the world? Have we wasted all those guitar strings and cracked cymbals and eardrums on a pipe dream? Obviously not. What Al and I missed at first was the question of context—we first heard those songs in the drama of gritty basements, as secret weapons we shared with our friends against a world upon which we declared war: small wonder, in such a setting, that those simple, artless songs had the power to forge destinies. Severed from the d.i.y. ecosystem that makes them vital, removed from their natural environment, placed in the zoos of corporation commerce and spectacle, of course they lose their wild beauty, of course they refuse to reproduce. That doesn't mean they weren't ever powerful to begin with—on the contrary, it suggests that that context, d.i.y., dirty basements, and drama, has the potential to make almost *anything* powerful.

So yes, I'm still engrossed in the struggle to write those songs, world revolution through punk rock is still one of my consuming passions. But more than ever I'm aware that we have to fight on two fronts: we have to arrange words and notes and hone structure, sure; at the same time we have to create situations in which "three chords and the truth" can actually matter, can be the beautiful, powerful things they should be. Rocking music and rocking the boat have to go hand in hand, or neither can have the teeth or heart both need.

Where does this leave music journalism, then? If Korn can be life-saving in Yugoslavia and CRASS can be mere kitsch on I-95, if the value of the music depends completely on the context it occurs in, how

¹ See? Umlaut lyrics can have a positive influence.

is a 'zinester or scenester to offer any useful perspective at all? Shouldn't we just make 'zines about creating context, then? That is what most of Inside Front has become, anyway—so why have reviews at all? Well, I don't know. Some of the records reviewed here, especially some of the ones I think are fucking great, you may not have heard of before. So here you go, a few reviews, just in case—maybe we won't lead you astray.

And as for you, Music Listener, how should you pick a good record? This is what I've been building up to—it's not just up to the records. If you want to be moved by music, if you want it to matter, then you have to create the context for that in your own life. Live like fire, risk everything for what you love, and records that others dismiss as trite or tired will bring tears to your eyes. Give those world-transforming songs burning worlds within you to resonate with, make liberated spaces in which both people and songs can have power and meaning. Not that you have to move to a war-torn nation or suffer a life of hardship and fear to accomplish this—it should be enough to pursue your dreams and support others in pursuing theirs, and run into the inevitable few nightmares along the way—but the guy who hosted us in Sarajevo who listened to Korn, or for that matter the fourteen-year-old watching his friends play in their first Dis-band and thinking it the best noise the world has ever heard, they are the ones who really know good music, not the critics.

REVIEWER CODE:

- @ Gloria Cubana, queen of the world
- b Your humble editor
- b-side Bruce Burnside
- xb Straight Edge as Fuck Ben!
- s Stef
- JUG Juggler Greg Bennick

show reviews

FACE DOWN IN SHIT, SAN

FRANCISCO: Copied right out of an email from my friend Jason, their guitarist.

Hey Brian, this is a show 'review' from San Francisco! The offending 'Virginia tree-metaller' is me, And the 'girlfriends' are actually Iman and some other girl who met us up in Portland (from the tour that was two years ago with the LP). I found it really funny, it's from the SF Guardian.

"Burmese with Face Down In Shit"

Face Down in Shit played some kind of Virginian pro-tree metal, prefacing each

song with stuff like, "This here's a sawng about settin' in the woods with y'all's buddies round a campfire and watchin' th' ashes go up in the a-ye." After they were done, all of their girlfriends sat down on the floor in front of where Burmese set up, in front of the stage. Burmese played for about 10 seconds before Mike (the little one) stomped all over the women like he hadn't seen them.

He ended up tangled up among them and their suddenly very angry boyfriends. Mike then started doing his usual raging against the audience, getting closer and closer with his bass each time. Finally, one of the Virginians grabbed him and punched his face so hard that his glasses came off and he went sprawling and all his pedals came unplugged.

He plugged them back in and charged the audience, and this time he was thrown into the drum set so hard that the drums fell over. A long buzzing sound followed, and Burmese lurched into another song, hampered by the fact that the hippie metal guys were trying to fight them as they played their show. The set ended 15 minutes after it started, with the lights on and scrawny Mike standing there, his fist raised, challenging someone else to punch him in the face, surrounded by pedals, strings, drum equipment, and the sound of the amplifiers turned up too loud.

ZEGOTA, WASHINGTON DC (farewell show during the National Conference on Organized Resistance, 2002)

I stood outside the show space while Ashley napped in the car, nursing a hangover; but the moment Jon arrived, we promptly took off for a walk around the nearby Mall. We walked in the night shadows of the Capital lights and spoke of the things to come. He was excited and nervous to be at the end of an era; though the band would continue, everything was about to change as they forged off to destinies not yet known. Being present for Zegota's last North American

show for several years to come, preceding their move to Sweden, was a meaningful experience for many of us, as the band had become mingled with our lives over the past four years. In that January of last year after a day at the National Conference on Organized Resistance in Washington D.C. the basement of a church hall downtown was packed with conference goers and people who had come from all over to attend the show. There were many bands that played that night, Kill the Man Who Questions and Redención 9-11 stand out in my mind, but it was Zegota's night, and it was a pleasure to see how far the band had come on the eve of their departure. The lads showed off everything they had learned together, especially since Ard's addition a year and a half previous, holding nothing back. Will opened the set quietly on kora, an African harp, and slowly Jon and Birch, the sometimes brass player for Zegota, followed in on saxophones, intertwining slow and easy, and soon Ard found his way in on the bass. In the midst of all this Jon and Will switched to guitar and drum kit, building and finally bringing the improvisation to a crescendo, a wall of sound and music—the tension built up in the room connecting each person to the next—a brief moment of silence and then total release, launching into the driving "Lesser of Man." Zegota at its best is articulate passionate release and they maintained that electricity and sincerity through the entire set. After "Lesser of Man" they played their two newest compositions, "Thrones for the Worthy, Graves for the Rest" and "15." Ard spoke on the importance of chasing your passions. And before "15" Moe delivered a eulogy to a friend who had taken her life and the importance of being surrounded by friends and allies, as we were then, all brought together by this music and this time. As the finale to the set Jon began by speaking about life during wartime and resistance on all levels. The band played Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's "Ohio," still so pertinent to our times, which they had slowly made their own over the years. During a quiet part of



reviews

the song, before the chorus comes back in Moe and Jon started whispering away from the mikes in unison: "Tin soldiers and Bush is coming," almost inaudibly, and slowly the whole room joined in the chant until our whispers had become a shout and the song came crashing to a finish, everyone and everything in a state of movement. In that last moment of feedback, Jon, on the ground, plucked carefully, the first few forlorn unfinished notes of the composition of a dead composer, and everyone followed him back in, Birch included, to build and break again over the room... The hall was left in an echoing silence comforting everyone in a state of smiling and tears. The band had meant to run "Eternal Flame" over the PA as the outro music, but in the chaos and emotion, it didn't happen; the subtle tribute to Sweden played unheard. It was poignant to be gathered there that night, in that transitioning moment, as if we had all gone down to the train station to wave off our friends who were going on a journey that would change everything. And on the platform we had kissed and laughed and wept and had known that no matter where any one of us went we would all carry this goodbye close, as it pushed us forward.

APPENDIX: A TALK WITH ZEGOTA IN THREE PARTS

ON DUTCH BASS PLAYERS

Bruce: The spring of 2000 you found yourselves without a bass player again, and I think it's quite revealing how you went about finding a new one. It's not every day that people move continents for the sake of joining a DIY punk band. You basically just put on Ard on a plane over here without so much an audition. The previous winter Jon was playing guitar for Catharsis in Europe and had a few days to get to know Ard beforehand—

Johnny G: I think at that time I had got a pretty good feel for Ard over there.

Moe: You didn't seem that way that spring when we deciding whether or not to do this.

B: It was a big decision. But what I see is an ordering of priorities for your band.

IG: That's true, what was important about it was not technical skill, but that we felt that Ard was coming from the same place in terms of what is

important about music: music as emotional expression. But also that Ard shared our idea of music as a tool and a revolutionary means of communication. I knew that he would be down with our lifestyle activism, which is a pretty big deal if you're going to be in a band. To be down with dumpster diving, and going extra lengths. And so being sure of those few things, overpowered our uncertainty about is technical skill or the fact that he wasn't really a bass player or that he had no experience touring. His political and emotional wavelength was the highest priority. We had good bass players before, but they turned out to be on different wavelengths, and it was ultimately destructive. We were all shaped by that. This time so far it's turned out well although sometimes I want to murder Ard and he wants to murder me.

B: Ard, what did Zegota offer you before you came, when you were still sitting at home on your farm in Holland? You're looking at the "Movement" record in your hands... What did this chance offer you in your life?

Ard: At that time I felt as if I needed something new, something refreshing, something that could absorb me totally, not a small change for a few hours a day, or on the weekend. I wanted something to take me to a place I had never been too. Take me to worlds I would not have access to by myself. It wasn't so much that I couldn't change

lacked where I was. Maybe it isn't necessary to have done things the way I did. But at the time it was the absolute best decision I could have ever made. Partly it was simply the excitement of not knowing what was coming. I knew the change would provide the qualities of which I was seeking, but not what form. I knew Jon a little, and the record and the writings, they meant a lot to me. I decided that they would be the people that would have the impact I was seeking.

ON THE MAKING OF THE "NAMASTÉ" LP

B: Where did Zegota take this project with the "Namasté" LP? What new directions have you all forged out, where did you go that the first full length ["Movement in the Music"] didn't?

IG: We had a different approach to it with "Namasté"—whereas, at least for me, when we recorded before I was way too focused on getting everything exactly right: chord changes, playing all the strings, making sure that every rhythm was right, everything on time. This time our emphasis is much more emotional—just trying to create a space, open ourselves up and bash out what ever comes to our heads. And trying to work on that level where we boil down all this technical considerations into what is important, which is the emotion of the music—and trying to capture that instead of being the best that we technically can.

A: I feel, even though I wasn't part of the first LP ["Movement in the Music"] recording, that this one is not so constrained. It seems that we allow ourselves to take some more risks, to take a more uncommon approach. Really when we came into the studio to record this we really didn't know how the puzzle would work—but by the end it pieced together automatically without being forced. I felt that this is a documentation of what really is going on instead of robotizing what we did before and making it into a clinical recording.

IG: Yeah, that was an important element in recording this: documentation. We wanted to reflect the ways we have grown and progressed since we recorded "Movement In The Music." We have a new band member since then – we don't have a whole lot of new songs. It takes us a long time to write songs and we had to spend a lot of time getting Ard up to speed on a lot of things—we

were touring and we just didn't have a lot of time for songwriting. A lot of it is just documenting what was happening while we

STEF'S "DISCLAIMER":

Perhaps I'm not totally qualified to do reviews. In fact, these are the first reviews that I've written. I don't make much of an effort to keep up with punk "trends" and I generally don't buy records or read reviews (unless they're about my friends' bands). The only time I hear new music is when a touring band comes through my town (which is actually frequently), my own band goes on tour, or when stuff arrives for Inside Front. Don't get me wrong—I love music, it's one of the most important parts of my life. There's usually just a small handful of releases that I'm excited about and everything else I don't pay much mind to. I'd rather see a live band any day. So pardon my lack of references for comparison, especially when it comes to the more metallic stuff. I've tried really hard here and I don't feel like I've done that bad of a job.

My five favorite bands when I was 16:
Naked Aggression, Nirvana, the Pist, Crass, Bikini Kill

My five favorite current bands:
Tragedy, Breed/Extinction., Kylesa, Diallo, Gehenna

My five favorite bands of all time at age 23:
His Hero Is Gone, PJ Harvey, Nirvana, Catharsis, Youth of Today

Bands that have been frequenting my stereo in the past few weeks:
Del Cielo, Tragedy, the Pixies, HHIG, Kylesa, Axegrinder, Breed/Extinction, Amebix, the Breeders, Dystopia, Diallo, the Awakening, Fugazi, Bold, Diamanda Galas

myself, but my longing for others who were trying to do the same things, whose input was total, rigorous. The willingness to go all the way, that was something I totally

were on the road, the ways we changed, the ways we found to keep things fresh and new.

B: What I like about it is that way it reflects the organic process of touring—especially being on tour for five months. Ideas develop, songs, especially when you're allowing space for improvisations like you did.

IG: To keep it vital you have to, otherwise it just becomes an opaque routine without emotion and without feeling. I don't think any of us are about to become robots.

ON THE PUNK BAND AS COLLECTIVE

M: I think first we try to give each other personal space to move around in and also to trust one another's judgments and intentions, even when they might not seem the most rational thing at the time. To have trust and faith with one another. Whereas so-called authority figures like bosses and politicians—these people who make all the decisions I don't know and surely don't trust. They make irrational decisions, and fuck, I don't trust them at all. I don't have faith in these people who have created this image based society that we live in—look what they've done to the world. Whereas Jon can be making a decision that seems irrational to me, but if his heart is in it I support it, because I trust him enough. I give him the benefit of the doubt, to make the decisions that need to be made and run with them.

IG: It basically boils down to a respect we have for each other. I think that's what Moe is getting at too. I respect these people to, number one, trust them with my emotional safety and emotional health and that feeds my ability to be able to express myself with them. This is essential in a musical group where the goal is to express. People who don't live hard and with fire and passion might not understand and be able to work in this manner. The fact that we all know what it's like to have to fight with the whole world just to give your desires a bit of honor and respect means we can be there for each other when the world comes crashing in and deal with it.

B: This is why I consider Zegota not only a valuable but a dangerous band. The common societal consensus is that living with fire and passion is going to ultimately be self-defeating—the example made of rock stars constantly reinforces this “truth,”

that you can only burn so long before you devour everything around you. While Zegota is saying, Let's make it sustainable for the four of us, for all of us—creating a space where that can be a reality.

A: I think that living with passion is easily maligned by society because anger (towards others or oneself) is so often portrayed as the flaw of intense feeling. We don't deny anger's truth but try and incorporate it into the greater spectrum of passion and give it a healthy space to live it and not totally self-destructive. To admit to it and not cast it in some dark corner.

IG: But also we reserve the right to self-destruct and to be unafraid to hate if that's what you need to go through.

B: So it's okay to scrape the floor and be in the muck, if you need to be there—and hopefully when you look up someone will be there for you—

IG: When you're ready to come back.

ZEGOTA PRODUCTION UPDATE: as of May 2003 gathering storms in Sweden (shows? recordings? soon?). To get in touch with the band, write: Zegota/ 1104 Buckingham Rd./ Greensboro, NC/ 27408/ USA

multimedia reviews

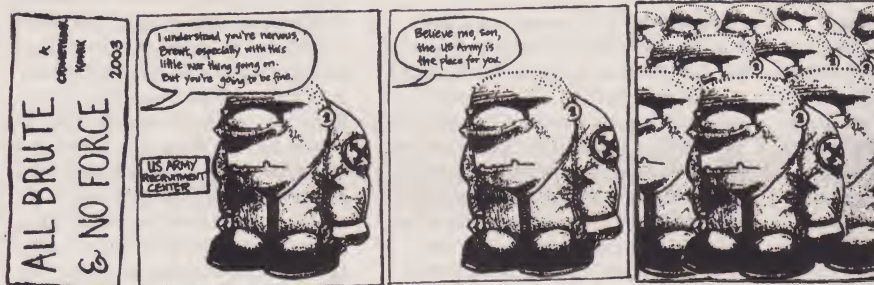
CREATION IS CRUCIFIXION “CHILD AS AUDIENCE” CD AND BOOK:

Here we have an intersection of technical math-metal, digital-technology hacking, and cultural warfare—fascinating, and definitely not something you encounter regularly in any one of those three contexts. The foundation for this opus is a hacking project, in which the programmers hacked into a Nintendo Gameboy and taught it a subversive, home-made game in place of the one it was designed for; the CD includes “development software” so the user can carry out this hacking herself, which—practicing Luddite that I am—I have not yet been able to open. The basic idea here is to infiltrate the daily environment constructed by adults which children take for granted, and crack the facade to show that other worlds are possible.

The audio portion of the CD includes a spoken word piece over a noise track, laying out the case for their child-liberation program(ming), alternating with, as I said, technical math-metal—growing vocals, unbelievable technical proficiency in the playing, excessively complex compositions. When I saw them, singer Nathan was screaming his vocals while programming the noise track on his laptop, creating a strange spectacle that didn't exactly create an emotional connection between the band and the audience but certainly left an impression. Afterwards, I told him their songs sounded to me like the music I imagined martians would make if they decided to form a hardcore band with only a copy of HeartattaCk, 2600 magazine, and a few death metal mix tapes to work from; I'm not sure if he took that as a compliment, but I intended it as one! The book, which includes complete text in German, French, and Dutch as well as English, gives the necessary schematics and instructions for the Gameboy hacking, as well as a lengthy discussion of the colonization of childhood by Capital and how to undermine it—oh, and lyrics and that stuff. At the bottom of it all, it's unclear to me whether the Carbon Defense League (another of the groups involved in this release, and essentially an alternate incarnation of Creation Is Crucifixion) is actually opposed to silicon technology, or just seeks to contest the monopoly over its social application held by the powers that be; but I like that ambiguity. I think it gives them strength to accomplish things on various fronts at once, rather than limiting themselves to a single platform and method. I believe we need subversive groups who can't be pinned down, who can be recognized not for their rigid ideological stances but for the fact that wherever they go, they stir up shit and leave everyone confronting new questions. This project gets full marks for that—and also for providing the resources to enable anyone else who is interested to join in.

Before this review is concluded, let me point out something very wise that these folks are doing here, which others involved in the d.i.y. “record industry” should take note of: they are mass-producing resources for committing crime, and distributing them as entertainment products. This is brilliant, because it expands and dilutes the pool of potential suspects should the powers that be try to crack down on this particular hack. If

thousands of music fans have this CD, and there is evidence that some people have been applying the technology on it, the State will have no idea where to start to track them down. If this same technology were available in a more limited context, it would be easier for those fuckers to keep up with who has access to it. Next time you mass-produce a CD



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forgotten classics

yourself, put a generic bomb threat on it, or a program to be broadcast over pirate radio, or something else along those lines! —b
www.hactivist.com is your best bet to track this down, or other projects by these folks.

CONCRETE "NUNC SCIO TENEBRIS LUX" CD: I'm not sure how old this one

was. He told me it was Concrete, a band from Rome, and then adhered to what seems to be an Italian custom by insisting that I keep the tape. I listened to it the next six months until it would barely play any longer. Luckily, Gavin at Stickfigure had the CD in his distro so I got him to send me one. I know absolutely nothing about this band beyond these songs—I have no idea what their politics are, what other music they have made or if they're even still together. The CD starts strong with

complex, clocking in at just under forty minutes. Some of the songs move from total chaos to nearly inaudible ambience to tribal-sounding drums built around the toms in a matter of minutes without ever sounding abrupt or unnatural. There's even a section in the middle of the CD that is structured much like a Godspeed, You Black Emperor! song although, chronologically, I doubt it was influenced much by them. The part comes out of chaos and starts with a simple, slow bass progression that slowly adds guitar, piano, violin, cello and contrabass. It is devastating and triumphant. I like this band very much. If anyone out there has anything else they have recorded and wants to dub me a copy in trade for something, get in touch through I.F. please. —s
 SOA Records, via Oderisi da Gubbio 67/69, 00146 Rome, Italy

EDITOR'S TOP TEN LITTLE-KNOWN HARDCORE MASTERPIECES

1. Systral "Fever" 10—I still stand by this as a record that makes the overused words "brutal" and "devastating" meaningful again.
2. Kriticka Situace 12—This Czech band, at their peak, had all the soul and spirit of 7 Seconds and all the energy and adrenaline of Metallica at their best; their LP is, in my opinion, one of the best punk records of all time.
3. Headsmen "The Morning" 12—I may well be one of the only people outside of Northern Italy that noticed this record, but it's been really important to me: the broken English lyrics are deeply poetic, the singing vocals behind the screaming are sad and beautiful, the musical experimentation opens new possibilities for the attentive listener. The bass sound is still one of the worst ever produced, though!
4. Mayday "The Underdark" 7—Perhaps no one remembers the dark, crazy, strange seven inch first recorded by this hardcore band from the early '90's. It still sounds as unique, and as scary.
5. Stalingrad and Hard to Swallow split 7's with Underclass (not the Underclass stuff, though, I'm sad to say)—The Stalingrad songs are totally primitive, yet unforgettably vicious and desperate and catchy. In my opinion, their only song after this that lived up to these was the last one on their picture disc 7." The Hard to Swallow stuff is packed with adrenaline, brilliant transitions, and unusual musical ideas, too.
6. G.I.S.M. (everything they did)—One of the weirdest bands of all time, punk or not. Listen to this to cleanse your system when you've heard too many punk rock clichés. Their occasional Iron Maiden moments are powerfully moving, too, believe it or not.
7. Libertinagem CD and 'zine: This is the top of the heap when it comes to youthful, intellectual, hyper-radical anti/art punk rock. No one ever heard of this outside Brazil.
8. Antidote 7—This is the record Youth of Today spent their career trying to live up to; listening to it helps one understand better what they were going for. Watch out for the nationalist/quasi-racist song about "protecting American jobs," though—you can just leave that one off the mix tape!
9. Axe grinder "Rise of the Serpent Men" 12—Very few bands ever really captured the Amebix style or ambience. This LP, though, sounds like the extra tracks cut from the "Monolith" record.
10. demos: Bloodlet (they swiftly became jaded rock stars, but this was their best work—spooky, tense hardcore in the vein Mayday had just opened up). Headway (they were one of the most creative, soulful French hardcore bands of the 1990's, but they never recorded anything during their best phase... their demo, recorded shortly before that time, is the closest one can get), Earth Crisis (not that I actually liked their demo, but it was the best thing they ever did, by far, and few of their fans ever got to hear it)

is since I can't read Italian, but I thought it'd be important to let y'all know about it because this CD has been really important to me over the past eighteen months or so. If "registrato, missato, masterizzato" translates to "recorded, mixed, mastered" then this was made in 1998, but like I said, I don't know Italian. We played at a squat somewhere in Italy one night and as we were winding down and getting ready for sleep, this album was playing on the stereo. It immediately caught my ear, so I asked our host who it

a double-kick fill that brings in a chunky metal hardcore riff. The vocals are insane—I think they're great, someone else might find them highly annoying. I think the singing sounds like a punk version of Perry Farrell (from Jane's Addiction) on crack. It's pretty monotone—the one note being out of key most of the time, throaty and obnoxious. The lyrics which are in Italian, fit the vocal style well, or perhaps vice versa, as there are a lot of rolled "r"s and held out vowels mid-scream. These five songs are long and

KRITICKA SITUACE "" CD: If I did a top ten list of bands you never heard of but should have, Kriticka Situace would be at #3 for sure. They would follow Pistols At Dusk (from Seattle) at #2, and Negate (from Belgium) at #1. Kriticka Situace was around in the late 80's and the very early 90's in the Czech Republic. No wonder you haven't heard of them. You were probably five when they put out this CD. Just kidding there, champ. So, to help enlighten you to the brooding rock and roll that was Kriticka Situace, I will start by telling you that they play this energized fast punk which doesn't fall into convention, and in fact rises constantly above it through poetic lyrics. Any band who uses the following words all on the same CD is a keeper: "subterranean", "insects", "myrmidons", "searchlights", and "graves". (By the way, I had no clue either: www.dictionary.com defines "myrmidons" as "a faithful follower who carries out orders without question"... thus proving once again, that aside from being endowed with a sense of history unparalleled in the US, and aside from all being bi and tri lingual, Europeans could mentally out-box Americans any day of the week with only a third of their brain cells intact. Americans are just a bunch of goddamn myrmidons). So, this CD: lots of bass breaks leading into fast guitar driven punk rock with lyrics about violence and oppression. But don't get me wrong, these aren't armchair warriors singing about how bad violence is and how we must all end oppression, or some similar empty garbage. What separates this CD from so many others is the perspective brought to the issues. When Kriticka Situace sings "You're proud of your truth / that sweet sensation of the victor, you want to live through it again and again / with flames in your eyes and your clenched fist / you throw yourself blindly into the night hunt" they are striking at the core of what makes myrmidons myrmidonic: the need to feel greater through following a leader into conflagration, even and especially through the loss of the individual's sense of self. Given the insanity going on now in Iraq, this song takes on new meaning. The band

takes another angle on war and violence with their song Majority, in which they sing "We admire movies with military themes /

EDITOR'S TOP TEN IN PUNK, 2001 TO MID-2003

1. Flying Circus Convergence in Des Moines, August 2002
2. Tragedy, everything they do
3. Zegota, everything too
4. Cathode "A Machine That Never Falts" CD
5. The Spectacle 10"
6. David Sandstrom "Om Det Inte Hander Nat Innan Imorgon Sa Kommer Jag" CD
7. Analena, Burn Hollywood Burn, Newborn, the Spectacle, Cathode, Face Down in Shit, Majority Rule, USA IS A MONSTER live—soul, baby, soul.
8. Sicarii, Jeniger, Blacken the Skies, Shank, Cementario Show, Diallo, Kontrovers live—punk fucking rock!
9. books/zines: Beating Hearts of the World Unite, Half Wild
10. Honorable mentions: Retorica "1st Communiqué" CD (very ambitious and original), Darkest Hour live (they really rock—and I mean "rock"!)

We listen to music with brutal lyrics / Our eyes widen, thrilled with violent fights / and we don't care who they dig the graves for". The sense throughout is of an awareness not only of violence, but more importantly, of the power dynamics and hierarchies that keep violence in place, and which in fact, use violence and unrest and dis-ease as tool to maintain status quos. Make sense? One thing you should know about this band is that they sing entirely in Czech with the lyrics translated into English. This is always a preferred method in my opinion because the art inherent in the delivery of the words can be more intense when presented in the original language. I am sure the Czech word for "myrmidons" is much easier to say in Czech when sung at 150 beats a minute. Then again, Czech is one of the most difficult to pronounce languages in the world as far as I can tell. I am pretty sure that sometime in history, the world decided to strip Czechoslovakia of all their vowels, but you might want to check my facts just to make sure. Modern

day cities like Brno and Plzen used to have a much higher vowel proportion, or V.P., before this ruling went into effect. So, the point is, that "myrmidons" might in fact not be simpler to say in Czech, which would just make me more impressed with this band. These guys get bonus points for using the words of Czech poet Frana Sramek as the lyrics to a full song. The words were written in 1914, and I am not sure how well the poem translates, but I like the bringing together of the two worlds of words and passions. Overall: fast punk without stereotypical sound or style meeting head to head with passionate spoken style screaming combined with basic production (but a good mix) and lyrics of which sincerity is not a question. You might have to look really hard to find this disc... and I wish you a successful quest. -JUG

Day After, c/o Mira Paty, Horska 20, 352 01 As, Czech Republic

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1905 "VOICE": The intro had me on totally the wrong track for this: feedback, discord, and a snare drum overloaded to sound somewhere between a bomb explosion and one of those great shitty live recordings of early '80's punk bands. But it ends suddenly, and we're suddenly in a sort of pop punk territory with soft singing vocals. As the record progresses, a rougher edge comes in and out again, with some hoarse-throated screaming and more punk intensity (on the eleventh track, they even

hazard pairing a blast beat with melodic vocals, an interesting experiment that I'm afraid doesn't work out well). At that point I'm already a little confused, but there are some strange moments yet to come: at one point, both vocalists scream "I don't want to look at the stars with you until you can look at strangers with me!!!" and the band goes into a crazy noise part (think Refused at the high point of their song "Shape of Punk to Come")—huh? The lyrics range from that kind of impenetrable venting on personal issues to more explicit, dare I say political, material, all suffused with an earnest longing. I think the drums are too high in the mix, and the guitars too quiet. I'll give them credit for this, though: they don't really sound like anyone else. I imagine they'll develop what they're doing a little more by the next record, and it could turn out to be something interesting and original. I don't want to give the wrong impression, either—there are definitely high-energy moments, and haunting ones. My favorite part is the piano interlude near the end. -b Exotic Fever Records, P.O. Box 297, College Park, MD 20741-0297

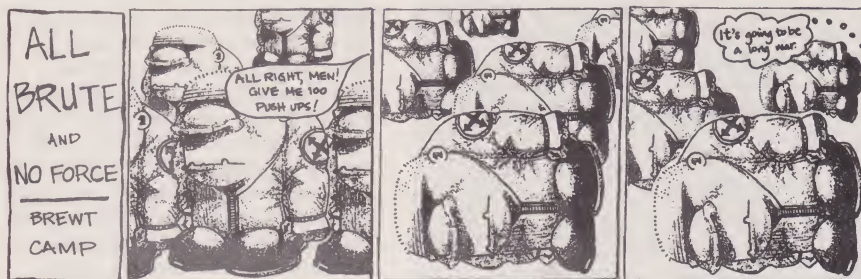
ALCATRAZ "NI DIEU NI MAITRE, A BAS LA CALOTTE ET VIVE LA SOCIALE" CD (WHEW!): Wow, reviewing this is a pretty overwhelming prospect: twenty five songs from three different recording sessions totaling about 70 minutes of music, previously split up between about eight earlier releases, collected here with a 60 page booklet

featuring lyrics, in-depth discussions of every song, and other texts in both their native French and also English, not to mention Spanish and Italian. Musically, this is raw, abrasive emo/hardcore, in the tradition that still shows signs of the influence of Acme as well as Rites of Spring. The tempo keeps pretty close to the middle of the spectrum, but blast beats break that trend from time to time, and there's plenty of variety in the compositions, and plenty of spirit and anger in the music—and hope, too. Most of the time someone's shrieking, but one of the vocalists sings sometimes, and she has a beautifully clear voice. A horn and violin make a brief appearance mid-way through—good for them, more of that! That song, a sprawling improvisation, turns out to be my

favorite one. The recordings are clear and crisp and powerful, even the older ones. Ideologically, they're coming from an anti-authoritarian left-wing perspective (I think they identify as communists of some kind, but they don't really set off the bullshit alarms for me), with thorough discussions of the evils of corporate globalization, the difficulties in confronting

THE JUGGLER'S TOP TEN RECORDS TO OWN IN ORDER TO LAUGH UNCARINGLY IN THE FACE OF THE APOCALYPSE

10. At the Gates - Slaughter of the Soul - LP
9. In Flames - Clayman LP
8. Catharsis - Samsara LP
7. Negate - demo
6. Iron Maiden - Live After Death - 2xLP
5. Pistols At Dusk - demo
4. Trial - Are These Our Lives? LP
3. Marillion - Clutching At Straws - LP
2. Rush - Counterparts - LP
1. The Proletariat - Indifference - LP



reviews

entrenched patriarchy, the class war, and even one of those silly little traditional rants about how hardcore sucks now. Let's forgive them for that, and sum up: this is an exemplary example of a great punk record, and miles ahead of almost everything else out there in terms of content and packaging. Even the layout is artistic and yet clear! If only every band would go to the trouble of building this much content into each release. -b

Stonehenge c/o Christophe Mora, 21 Rue des Broses, 78200 Magnanville, France

ANTI OTPAD "RDNICKI SAN" CD:

This is punk rock at its best with charmingly bad sound quality and a whole lot of energy. This style reminds me of spiking my bi-hawk, getting a ride from Dad and circle pitting at the local teen center where we would book shows. I hear a bit of the Pist, Crudos, Naked Aggression and even a touch of Pennywise and Bouncing Souls. This is all in Croatian but the English translations, included on a separate photocopy—which perhaps was slipped only into the copies going to stupid self-centered Americans

like myself—indicate that the songs are about consumerism, authority, parents, killing your boss and drug addicts to name just a few topics. The vocals range from screaming to melodic singing to group shouts. The playing is not all too impressive but the sincerity and Black Flag guitar solos make up for anything that may have been lacking. This band has a youthful energy and urgency that is missing in a lot of modern punk. All in all this is a keeper. I'll be listening to this one at least a few more times. -s
Darko Hocevar Koparska 54, Pula Croatia

ANTIMANIAX "AS LONG AS PEOPLE THINK" CD:

"As long as people think that animals don't feel, they have to feel that people don't think," reads the slogan in its entirety inside their packaging—it's also the chorus of their first song. That song

BREED/EXTINCTION "ALASKA" CD: Since I know all of the people involved in the production of this CD, from the guy who released it, to the kid who did the artwork for the layout, to the dude who recorded it, it's probably impossible for me to give any sort of unbiased review, but, fuck it—this band rocks my world.

Breed/Extinction has gone through many line-up changes in the past few years and I'm not even sure who is in the band at this very moment, but I've at least known Rob, the guitarist and vocalist, for nearly a decade now. We probably first met when his Oi band and my street punk band played together at some Connecticut teen center. I think it was B/E's second show that I saw somewhere in Brookfield, CT several years later, and I was completely blown away. Over the next twelve or eighteen months I made sure I made it out to every B/E show. I probably saw them play over fifty times and I even followed them on their first tour (a week or so) as to not miss any action. There have been few bands that have meant that much to me.

I eventually moved to North Carolina and only saw those kids when I went home to visit or one of them ended up traveling through the south... until the band I was in all-of-a-sudden lost its bass player within weeks of a five month tour. Rob came to the rescue, the ready-to-go motherfucker that he is, and did the entire tour with us.

So what do they sound like? Well, their other releases are somewhat easier to pinpoint: somewhere between HHIG and Catharsis, but at times a bit more metallic. This record, however, is much different. I was caught off guard on the first listen. They definitely seem to have moved in their own direction. The songs are very intricate and well-written, giving each instrument (including vocals) a chance to shine and take the "lead" during different parts. There are a lot of well thought out harmonies and odd time patterns that fortunately avoid coming off sounding "math-y." A lot of this record is instrumental but it never gets boring. They cover a lot of ground from long, crazy build-ups to beautiful quiet parts that sound quite similar to some Godspeed, You Black Emperor! material, to full-blown chaos.

I only have two small criticisms of this record. There is a three second intro to one of the songs that sounds like a bad version of Botch—I could have done without that. And I do miss their old dual vocals that they no longer have because I thought the brutal low growls (that are no longer there due to their main singer parting ways) and the high-pitched howls complimented each other well.

If you have half of a brain in your head, check this record out. -s
Losing Face Records, P.O. Box 14641, Albany, NY 12212

BRUCE'S TOP TEN SINCE THE LAST INSIDE FRONT

1. Lack - Blues Moderne: Danois Explosifs LP and live in Scandinavia
2. Spirited Away - Animated film from Japanese master Hayao Miyazaki
3. Russian Ark - dream-induced *dérive* through the Hermitage in St. Petersburg in one unbelievable 90 minute sequence of 2,000 actors, a dozen time periods, and not one single cut.
4. "La Bohème" - New Broadway production
5. Pony Club - Home Truths LP
6. Safe Area Gorazde by Joe Sacco
7. Against Me! - The Disco Before the Breakdown 7" and live in Carrboro, NC, December, 2002.
8. The Black Book - by Orhan Pamuk
9. Yage - October LP and live in Holland
10. Zines: "Half Wild," "Invasion of the Bee Girls," and "Cometbus" #49

actually has some stuff in it that sounds like ska, and a lot of stuff in it that's essentially pop punk, with major key rock riffs, nasal melodic singing in harmony, the whole bit. Almost anything in that whole genre just makes my stomach turn, and most of this is no different, so I'll focus on their content: there's a Noam Chomsky sample about U.S. hypocrisy regarding the treatment of the Kurdish people by Iraq and Turkey, and all the song lyrics address important stuff (con: religion, the entertainment and animal exploitation industries, war, globalization... pro: freedom, non-consumer values, burning down banks!). I appreciate that, and really, as a pop punk band, they're not bad—I'm thrilled they're out there in a different milieu than my favorite bands work in, having a good influence on pop punk fans. Right on. -b

Household Name, P.O. Box 12886, London, SW9 6FE, England

APES OF THE UNION "" CD: I think I've got their name right, though I'm not certain... the kind of packaging the bands (is that even the right term?) in this genre (the wave of noise/dada/experimental stuff coming from the likes of Lightning Bolt, USA IS A MONSTER, Monster Attacks King Noise Machine, Herds and Words, etc.) opt for is usually deliberately confusing. Besides, I have a suspicion that this is actually a recording of a band I saw perform under the name "Ground Monkeys": like their performance, the basic fair here is guitar noise, ranging from psychotic to totally abstract, over chaotic drum improvisations. What I really liked about seeing them was the way they reinterpreted the use of the instruments, the drums especially: the drums weren't there to keep a rigid beat so much as to experiment with different speeds and intensities, increasing and decreasing them at will—while the guitarist, left to fend for himself, made parallel, if often artistically disparate, noise. There are also some quieter pieces on here, more spooky perhaps, but not exactly evocative. There are forty one

BURN HOLLYWOOD BURN "IT SHOUTS AND SINGS WITH LIFE...

EXPLODES WITH LOVE!" CD: It took me a few listens to figure out what kind of music they're playing for the first minute of this CD: surf music! It arrives through the filter of their cutting edge soulful hardcore aesthetic (think Zegota, perhaps?), so it wasn't easy to pin it down, but that's what's going on. After that part, the Zegota comparison becomes more appropriate in the actual parts and composition for the remainder of that song, but there are definitely some surf rock parts elsewhere on the record. Really, the seamless transitions between parts drawing on entirely disparate segments of music history demonstrate what skilled musicians and songsmiths they are. Things get really interesting around the middle of the third song: there's a quieter break, with intensifying guitar noise, and the singer's declamation is suddenly the center of all attention, in a moment distantly descended from Jim Morrison. That song ends, to name a more recent reference, with the same spent acidity as the end of that older Breed/Extinction song that closed with Greg spitting "boxes... inside boxes..." The fourth song is an instrumental from the lineage of Godspeed, You Black Emperor!, named after an ancient Latin palindrome that probably comes to this band through Guy Debord's use of it—if that doesn't identify for you the recent punk tradition they hail from, I don't know what will! The recording itself is a little dry, reminiscent (as are their title and cover art, snatches of their lyrics—"where do we go from here?," and perhaps some of their politics) of Refused's "Shape of Punk to Come," and I think a less clinical, warmer, more ragged recording might have flattered this more—it could have made them sound more like a band showing off their heart and soul than flaunting their technical precision. My favorite moment on the record is probably the opening riff of the fifth song, which sounds like a cover of some lost segment of Orff's epic *Carmena Burana*. Politically, this band doesn't stray too far from their forebears here—the liner notes emphasize that this is a commodity, and as such cannot compare to the immediacy and preciousness of a life lived for desire's sake—but their personality is apparent in the elements they choose to emphasize: their variation on Zegota's "Wreck Your Life" motto is "fuck it all," or, elsewhere, "we fuck your world," and elsewhere, "we fuck ourselves." It's ambiguous whether this is a sex-negative avowal of nihilism or an invitation to the world to make endless (and potentially sado-masochistic?) love, and in that playing with terms and fire there is an unfettered, volatile, dangerous power—one that rarely is engaged except by young punks too wild-eyed to know better! In that context, of course, when the vocalist, whose pronouncements throughout would be hard to interpret as anything other than individualist/adventurist, declares (in the Dennis/Refused tradition) "we'll get organized," it's clear he's just borrowing the anarcho-syndicalist lingo to refer to something much more disruptive than recruiting factory workers to the union. And—fuck, oh no!!!—finishing this review, I realize to my horror that we have put my *least favorite* Burn Hollywood Burn song on the CD that comes with this *Inside Front*, and it's far too late to rectify the situation. God, what a disaster. -b

Bisect Blep, P.O. Box 80249, 35102 Rennes Cedex 3, France

fucking tracks in all here—that's pretty overwhelming, not to say self-indulgent. See these guys play (assuming I've pegged their band right) and try to glean your own interesting perspectives from what they're doing, rather than starting with this CD—that's my suggestion. -b

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ASIDE FROM A DAY "MAIEUTICS"

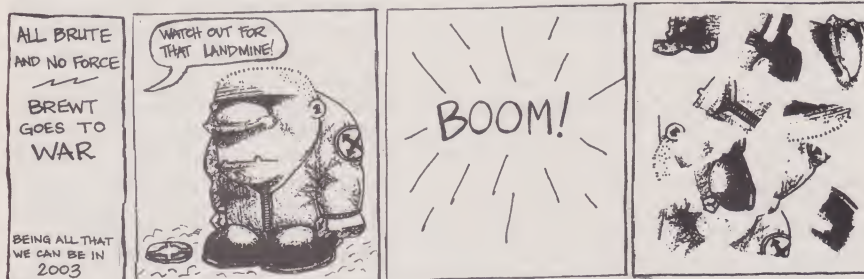
CD: This is metallic hardcore from France that is certainly more metal than hardcore. They sound like a combination of the Black Hand and Isis with shrieking vocals,

layered guitar harmonies and impressive instrumentation from every angle. This CD sounds pretty good too. There are full-on double kick assaults, vulnerable pretty pieces, noise samples here and there and tense build-ups. It has metal harmonies in strange keys, starts and stops, blast beats, bass slides, mosh parts, d-beats—you name it. They're not necessarily doing anything original but there's enough variety to keep it interesting throughout the twenty five minutes that these songs fill. If you're into metallic hardcore certainly check this out. -s
Art-Scenic Production 13 rue de Vignier
25000 Besancon France

THE AWAKENING CD: This is a burned CD with hand-made packaging (beautifully crafted, may I add) with songs from three different 7"s, so I'm not sure if this is an "official" release or something they made only a few of. The music is fucking great and the recording is not bad at all. I've never heard a band quite like this. They seem to have taken the best parts of From Ashes Rise and Kill the Man Who Questions and tainted it with a bit of thrash and a whole lot of old school hardcore. The songs are loaded with d-beats, snare rolls, stops, breakdowns and metal harmonies. The vocals are youthful and urgent and remind me a bit of Ruination or some old youth crew band maybe like Bold except without the machismo. The lyrics are pretty good—apocalyptic and poetic with a hint of hope inspiring us to keep struggling: "toxins choke out the sun, your machines continue to seek us out, but our moment of clarity will come, rhythms of the earth cradle our children, the caress of the soil feeds our power within, in our darkest visions we have seen the end, in our darkest visions we are the burning wind, in all of our confusion we know our place in this world, we are the hungry and you have the food, crawling and kicking, fingertips bleeding, you cannot tear us from the sun." The song containing the lyrics I scrawled down [editor's note: she's not joking, Stef wrote all these reviews by hand] just came on and it's fucking great. I'm a fan of all sorts of hardcore with His Hero is Gone and Youth of Today being among my favorites, so this is right up my alley. This band is quite good. -s
The Awakening 1579 Indianola Ave.
Columbus, OH 43201

THE BARNHOUSE EFFECT ""

CASSETTE: Clean-channel guitars build an atmosphere, before distortion and shrieking kick in, the band still playing the same chord progressions. They're coming from the same scene as Cathode, although they lack that band's dedication to and mastery of the Gehenna aesthetic, leaning instead towards a less distinctive take on the noisy, screaming hardcore genre. The best moments for me in this recording are the ones when they push the intensity of the guitars, cymbals, and shrieking vocals almost to the point of white noise; the tempo rarely really accelerates, but the moments when it does are also among the best. Maybe they could do with more speed, or maybe that's just my own tastes. For the last song, there's a sample of a Kafka story (the guy who waits his whole life at the gate for access to the Law); a sort of light-hearted, clean improvisation (and—is that a cowbell?) begins over it, switches suddenly over to distortion and screaming and chaos, and back and forth a



reviews

couple times more. The demo comes with a little pamphlet version of the excellent Kurt Vonnegut story that is their namesake, in which "dynamopsychicism," the force of the mind, and its ethical applications, are

you!" before the vocals come in on the fifth track, which also begins with that sample from *Romper Stomper* (the Australian movie about racist skinheads), "We came to wreck everything, and ruin your life." The

downtuning, totally overloaded production, and unearthly atmosphere, Caraher manages to capture the same atmosphere Systral did on their amazing "Fever" 10". In fact, I'll be damned if they haven't been

listening to that record—the occasional metal leads and harmonies, deep rumbling and high shrieking dual vocals, and discordant chords are all here... let's cover the differences, then: Caraher lack the punchy bass drum Systral used, they don't work with samples (there's a noise track in the middle of the CD that I believe is from Kubrick's 2001, but that's not the same), and they tend to employ a pretty arbitrary song structure—the transitions make sense enough, but parts never come back around. That last quality might make the actual songs a little less memorable, but if you're listening to the record for its terrifying, dark ambiance, it won't bother you. The packaging includes extensive liner notes in both Portuguese and English about third world resistance to neo-liberalism, consumer culture, and imperialist capitalism in general, which is awesome. -b

Liberation, Caixa Postal 4193, Sao Paulo, SP 01061-970

CEMENTARIO SHOW "CD": I love this band on their split with Sin Dios (reviewed below), and while I think this recording might be a little older, I'm thrilled about it too. At their best (say, tracks 7 and 10) they mix up their frantic, top-speed hardcore punk with a sort of surf/devil rock thing, and it's fucking great. The drummer's love affair

with the snare drum is also in evidence here, everything from the raging vocals to the hyper-kinetic riffs evidences attitude with a capital 'A', and no part goes on any longer than it should. The recording is fine, but somehow I feel like it would be possible to make a more flattering mix of this, one with a scarier atmosphere perhaps. The lyrics appear in translation on the last page: attacks on child-worker exploitation, religious dogmatism, the mass media, soul-killing routine, even controlling parents—yes, this is punk rock. -b

W.C. records, Juan I. Herrero, Apdo. 41019, 28080 Madrid, Spain

CATHODE "A MACHINE THAT NEVER FALTERS" CD: Some of you may know that one of my favorite bands of all time was Gehenna. Gehenna, in their early years, made the most stomach-twisting, rage-filled, disgust-spitting hardcore punk the world has ever heard, in my opinion. After they recorded their 7", I was holding my breath for their full length, but a long time passed before they finally got around to recording it. By then, the band had changed a bit, and that record wasn't quite what I'd been hoping it would be: it was fast, furious, destructive, but lacked the complexity their earlier recordings had hinted they were capable of. This CD here, by Cathode, is the full length I'd been hoping Gehenna would record: it's fucking amazing. It's good enough that I can say that without meaning that it's simply derivative. It's not Gehenna, it lacks their bitter soul, but musically, everything is here—even the things that Gehenna should have gotten around to doing, and didn't: wide-ranging dynamics, unique drum patterns complementing equally unusual guitarwork, relentless rhythms and vocal attack, and a general atmosphere of ominous darkness and desperate agony broken up by flashes of the kind of rare beauty that can only be experienced under such conditions. Above all, as I've mentioned in a few other reviews—having original, timeless songs as well as good musical abilities is the dividing line between a good band and a great band, and Cathode has a whole record of songs here, all their own. Indeed it's one of the best records of the past few years, hands down, and I hope everyone who reads this 'zine gets the chance to hear it—or at least those of you with the same psychotic/maniacal emotional problems I have that make me relate to this so deeply. The d.i.y. packaging (yes, they released this themselves, as if I wasn't impressed with them already!) is starkly beautiful, black-on-grey images of our modern wasteland so abstract that they really capture a feeling of existential loss and lostness. The lyrics are the only place they could stand to improve; some songs are excellent in their simplicity (the first one, for example), but elsewhere they take too much from other bands in the genre (I hate to say it, but I think there are some actual lifts from lines off the "Passion" album)—though even then, as the guttural growls and throat-tearing screams are hardly intelligible, this doesn't hold the music back at all. If these guys can write lyrics that reflect their own unique experience of the world a bit more clearly, their next record will be a classic for all times. Assuming, that is, they're still together. -b

Mark van de Maat, Nijlandstraat 55, 7462 rz Rijssen, The Netherlands (markvdmaat@hotmail.com)

discussed—presumably this is a metaphor for the power we all have to control our own destinies, and thus the world, if we only take responsibility for ourselves. I'm really sympathetic to this band, their lyrics are earnest and passionate and they're going about everything the way I love to see d.i.y. bands go. I've got my fingers crossed that their next recording will really cross the line to be something unbelievable. -b

Thale, Schonaauensingel 8, 3523 JG Utrecht, The Netherlands

BURNING BRIDGES "THE BEST REVENGE" CD: This is precisely-

recorded tough hardcore a little bit further into the tough-guy spectrum than Walls of Jericho was. There are fast parts, which helps to keep the music interesting outside the kickboxing pit, and the playing is tight. Hardcore kids familiar with the history of Albany hardcore will know exactly what tradition this band hails from, and it's clear in the gruff vocals and mosh-parts with double bass blasts that they're set on carrying that torch forward. The singer counts off "one-two-fuck

lyrics are starkly individualistic, covering the various letdowns and frustrations of friendships gone awry. The burly, bearded singer has x's on his hands in the live photos, and kids are singing along—maybe straight edge is not dead yet after all! -b

Losing Face Records, P.O. Box 14641, Albany, NY 12212

CARAHTER "CD": North American and European metal/hardcore listeners take note, especially if you have political convictions, for you will probably not read about this great record in other hardcore publications from the global North. With their dramatic

CWILL "NATIONS" 10": Here it is, the real thing—a fucking hardcore punk record, in the classic sense! Breakneck speed, a dirty, fierce recording, a photo of a filthy latrine on a cover which reads "nations" in case their politics were unclear, epic drama in the climax of every song, band photo of punks playing in ski masks, deranged maniac screaming "we will never get out of this world alive because we are poisoned and enslaved by the horror we commit every day—hell is here" through torn vocal cords into a dented, rusted microphone. And the beautiful, mournful violin that distinguished this band before still soars above on some songs, adding a sadness that deepens the rage. The lyrics are gritty and yet soulful enough that the two songs which take their words from earlier poets—Pablo Neruda and Erich Fried—don't even stand apart from the others at first glance. These are both adeptly adapted, and make excellent punk songs, as it turns out. In my mind's eye, this band is playing a benefit at a squat the night before a political demonstration; the squatters watching out the windows lest the pigs close in ahead of time, the room steamy in mid-winter from all the bodies dancing and shouting along to the words of a dead South American poet; fists pump the air, guitarists leap and strike chords, promises are made internally to never back down, and everyone sleeps just a couple hours before shaking off the chill to hit the streets. Yes, we need records like this. -b

Cwill and Prawda, Scholastikastr. 24, CH-9400 Rorschach, Switzerland

CHESTERFIELD SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA "CD: Yes, an anarchist symphony orchestra! In a time when the evolution of punk and hardcore forms and conventions seems to have stagnated, this is exactly what we need! This could be something in the genre Neutral Milk Hotel plays in, if you know them: strings, strummed acoustic guitar, classical horns, theatrical narration. The third song works with those same elements, but adds another narrator; the variety of voices and the layers they form intensifies the effect. It would be easy to be annoyed with the vocalist in this format, but he sounds so earnest that it's hard not to find him endearing: I imagine him a young Walt Whitman, waving his script emphatically, starry eyes swimming in youth and dreams, delivering these spoken word pieces with all he's got—"the walls will spill, encouraging the waves—and the waves will triumph, when we are the making of freedom!" Trust me, it's not bad. He's still there on the fifth track, but in place of the orchestral background, there's an a capella piece sung smooth as silk by a group of women—at least for the first minute, before the ensemble kicks in again. The mood throughout is subdued but complex, melancholy and reflective; the playing itself is spectacular, symphony orchestra-quality to my untrained ears. And speaking of Whitman, and Allen Ginsberg for that matter—these five songs are followed by a fucking hilarious, eloquent take-off on those poets' compositions, composed and narrated on the evening of September 11, 2001: "America, why don't we enjoy the real explosions as much as the video games? America, why are the dumpsters locked?" Three more spoken word pieces by two other speakers follow: depression, confessions of troubled dreams, responding to rape. I don't think this band is still together in this format (that is, if these folks

ever thought of themselves as a band), but hopefully this CD can still be tracked down. -b
*Try this address (good luck!):
Kalie, 3415 Juno Street,
Pittsburgh, PA 15213*

CONFUSIONE "[?]" 7":

Fast, anxious, distraught punk rock. Lots of starts and stops—and nine songs on a 7", no less. The tense melodies only add to the desperation conveyed by the shrieking, broken-voiced vocalist, whose lyrics express a self-destructive nihilism that seems to be overstated—I think this is the sign of an idealism that still lies beneath the surface, wounded but unwilling to die, revealing itself through its opposite. -b
Heroine records c/o Boris Battistini, Via Galilei n. 6, 47020 Montiano (FC), Italy

DAWNCORE "WE ARE YOUNG... SO WE SCREAM... JUST TO FEEL ALIVE" 7":

I'm sure these kids have something new out now, maybe a couple records—but this is the latest one in my box, and part of what I do with my part of this 'zine is catalog my passage through the hardcore world, so here this is. The Budapest scene sure did figure out the whole metal hardcore thing to a t—this is top notch hyper-complex, hyper-speed, hyper-intense, hyper-moshable hardcore, coming in at the top of its class: tight machine-gun

bursts of double bass, intricate guitar-work, the whole thing. If I have any reservations, they would be (first) that it seems to be difficult to compose memorable songs in this genre—the parts hold together well and are memorable individually, but I think the world has yet to hear a classic in this genre that will have the staying power of some of those old blues songs that still get played today—and (second) that the lyrics put me in a sort of personal quandary: there is a song entitled "Let's Set the World On Fire," and another, better yet, called "Killing of the Spectators," and that kind of rhetoric gets me really excited, but I think they just mean it metaphorically, whereas

DAVID SANDSTROM "OM DET INTE HANDER NAT INNAN IMORGON SA KOMMER JAG" CD:

This is David's (yes, the drummer in Refused, and a member of Text) epic record dedicated to and telling the story of his grandfather, who lived and died struggling in northern Sweden. It's at once austere and eclectic: each part takes its sweet time to develop, leaving some space in which the listener finds himself alone with his thoughts, as the lines continue (not a bad thing, in this case); but if you consider the record as a whole and look at all the different instruments and arrangements going on, you find everything from post-classical compositions for strings and piano (think A Silver Mount Zion), to rock parts à la Bruce Springsteen, early Dire Straits, and Neil Young, to more atmospheric jazz-influenced stretches such as Cerberus Shoal might have played, theatrical a capella sections, and even Portishead moments with turntables and all. The closer you listen, the more treasures are revealed to you, as every last detail has been painstakingly fashioned, gauged, and slipped into place; this is a record to listen to on headphones as you take a long walk through snowy fields—perhaps every day for a month. It's clearly the work of one author, working alone, and I imagine if there had been others involved in the creative process, some stretches would have been a little denser in terms of—not diversity or ideas, exactly, as both are present in abundance here, but perhaps—perspective; at the same time, this particular record could probably only have entered the world as the work of a lone individual, and it's good enough that we've got it. To answer your question, hardcore boy, there are indeed a couple moments that are reminiscent of that punk band David played in and wrote for, and it's fascinating how he's translated that energy into a different aesthetic—a reminder that punk rock and, say, gospel music are not all that far apart, where it really matters. All the lyrics are in Swedish, but the music really is eloquent enough to convey the story alone; on the other hand, if you pestered Dave through the post for the English, he would probably oblige you.

Demon Box, Box 1043, SE-172 21 Sundbyberg, Sweden

I actually want to see the world in flames and spectators bleeding to death outside the bullfighting rings. So should I be frustrated with them for posing, or just enjoy this as "brutal metal, dude," or urge them to become actual arsonists? -b

Burning Season, Auf der Scheibe 20, 3130 Herzogenburg, Austria

DEAD THINGS "BECAUSE SOMETIMES YOU JUST WANT TO RIDE YOUR BIKE TO THE SHOW"

CD: It's hard for me to think of what to say about this band. Musically, they're not really my thing, but I love them anyhow. They must truly be a great band if their actions, personalities and sincerity win me over as a fan when I generally steer clear of anything that sounds like this. I'll first make a lame attempt to describe their music and then I'll get down to why I'm really into this band. Pardon my comparison if it's a little off due to lack of knowledge: I guess to me they sound like back-woods, more DIY version of Against Me! They definitely have that catchy pop/punk/folk feel to them with melodic guitars, harmonized male/

DEARBORN S.S. "7": This record exemplifies anarcho-punk at its best—confrontational, historically as well as politically conscious, with a local focus (in this case, on the secret history of the midwest from which they hail) to make it all that much more urgent. Songs fast enough to fit seven on a 7" (just barely!), busy drumming (even a few blastbeats), punk rock riffs, plenty of transitions in the songwriting, dual vocals (and yes, one male and one female vocalist... if I had to come up with comparisons, I would say a more vicious, pissed off Amy from Nausea, and then that guy from Rorschach), all these make for great listening, and the liner notes go into great detail about the connections between industrialist Henry Ford, anti-Semitic proselytizing, and the Nazis (Hitler said of his friend Ford "I wish I could send some of my shock troops to Chicago and other big American cities to help in the elections... we look to Heinrich Ford as the leader of the growing fascist movement in America," according to the Chicago Tribune). The lyrics even come translated into Spanish, French, and German! Of course these assholes broke up years ago now, but seek out this record at the least—and when you form a great band, stick together through a few tours. -b

Dearborn S.S., P.O. Box 220691, Chicago, IL 60622

reviews

female vocals and a generally upbeat, happy energy. The instrumentation on this record is skillful and tight although the sound quality itself is somewhat thin and distant.

DEL CIELO "WISH AND WAIT" CD: I

grew up listening to Kill Rock Stars stuff so this one wins my approval almost immediately. These three ladies definitely have their own style, but I'll compare them to Sleater Kinney for lack of a better reference. This is mid-tempo rock with dual female vocals and a lot of emotion. The songs are catchy and I totally find myself singing along. The lyrics seem to be mostly personal about relationships and self-reflection, which is refreshing for me since I generally listen to bands with straight-up political lyrics. These ladies might not be singing about what I feel are vital and urgent issues, but

FACE DOWN IN SHIT "SHIT BLOODY SHIT" CD: This band has really matured into something amazing, as the first (and most recently recorded) track shows. It begins with a beautiful, sad buildup, violins and piano over guitars, such as Neurosis might have done at their best. Once the engines get running, though, it takes off like a Motorhead song, and when the screaming vocals come in the gears shift again to something that sounds a little more like the mid-'90s Bremen hardcore characterized by Acme, Systral, and Morser. You can tell from some of the fast-and-chunky riffs that these kids listened to metal bands in the '80's; but none of this is derivative, FDIS have a very distinctive style of their own—and, most importantly, *soul*. You can recognize it in the stoner rock bass lines, the dramatic, dragged-out hanging open notes a la early His Hero Is Gone—when they're slow, they're painfully slow with a grit you can almost taste, and when they get going, it's like a monstrous machine tearing through the underbrush, kicking up dirt and rocks. The layout and design are remarkably well done for Greensboro slackers like these folks, and I love that they never shy away from going over the top: song titles include "Born in Fucking Chains" and "Bleeding in the Street," and the lyric booklet actually has a photo of someone hugging a tree (in keeping with their pro-nature bent) on the back. This CD collects the song from their elusive split 10" with Cold Electric Fire, their "Concrete World" LP (which they released themselves—right on), and their demo. The demo is almost unlistenable compared to the other recordings, which are much more vital and dynamic—despite having each been done, against all common sense, in only one day. I just find myself listening to the first track over and over—it's a fucking song, a unique song that stands apart in an era when thousands of bands are playing music but few are actually writing songs that will be remembered years from now. Yes, this is the real thing. -b
Crimes Against Humanity, P.O. Box 1421, Eau Claire, WI 54702-1421

The artwork and layout are great and there are fifteen songs. Alright, let's get down to business. Dead Things are rad because they did a tour (playing shows) of the entire state of North Carolina—one of the larger states on the East coast—on their bikes. Also, they have lyrics such as "stop building your big houses on out mountain sides ya yuppies, we've got garden tools!" and "more than two wheels is too many for me, gonna run your car into a fucking tree." I want to hear more songs in the world about beating up yuppies with shovels! -s

Slave PO Box 10093 Greensboro, NC 27404

they certainly are active. They're involved with a lot of projects in their community, the D.C. area. Plus, they're just really nice, charming people. They stayed at my house on their way to a show in Georgia and immediately made friends with my foster brother, Justin. Several days later, a mix tape arrived in the mail for him from the band. Anyone that makes Justin happy gets a "thumbs up" in my book. -s
EyeBall Records PO Box 1653 Peter Stuyvesant Station NY, NY 10009

DIVINITY OF TRUTH "UNTITLED"

CD: This CD has some of the craziest packaging I've ever seen. Sometimes packaging like this just gets in the way when you just want to listen to the music, but this is so well-done that it's worth the extra effort. And that says a lot, because I'm pretty lazy. The whole shebang is wrapped in a piece of black cardstock, with no less than 3 screen prints on it, including lyrics. The CD is wrapped in black tissue paper (with handwritten words on it) and mounted on a brad. The entirety is wrapped in a piece of black ribbon, and also includes a small insert with thank-you's and credits. Someone really loves their band. The music doesn't let me down, even after they raised my expectations with their fancy packaging. Divinity Of Truth play really competent metallic hardcore, with seamless transitions into slower, more vulnerable-sounding parts. The vocals are heartfelt, with well-written lyrics about greed, remorse, pain, and finding your own path through it all. I wholeheartedly recommend this, but it's limited to 450 hand-numbered copies (with this packaging, at least), so you might be out of luck. -xb
DOT, P.O. Box 208, Kapowsin, WA 98344

E150 [PARTIAL DISCOGRAPHY]

CD: Through all forty five minutes here, E150 are always incredibly energetic, often catchy, and sometimes unforgettable. It's not one of those classic records that will never fade from relevance (there's just not quite enough to set these songs apart from songs by the other great bands in this genre), but it's pretty close to the top of the heap of runners-up, and makes for great fucking listening if you love punk rock. This is a collection of eight different releases, from 7"s to split 7"s to compilation tracks, ranging from '96 to '00 and totaling 28 tracks (covers: Poison Idea, Beyond Description, Toreros after ole, and a twenty second Lärm song). Lots of fucking d-beats of all kinds, occasional blastbeats and plenty of snare drum rolls, grainy distorted bass, two vocalists: one shrieking, one yelling.

DIALLO "DIAGRAM OF A SCAM" 7": This is another band that I have some background with. We came from the same scene and sort of grew up together—we weren't from the same town or anything and never really hung out much, but our various bands played many shows together. This is by far the best band that any of these kids have done. They are fucking relentless, brutal, passionate and full of energy and sincerity. Living far away from them now, I had heard a good deal about them before I actually got to listen and boy was I stoked when I finally heard them. This band is totally the new His Hero Is Gone and possesses all the skill and heart needed to fill those big old-school skate shoes. Yes, indeed they sound very much like HHIG, which is great for me and I don't mind at all that it's not that original because I'm at a place in my life where that particular style is still what drives me, makes me shake my fists and want to destroy everything and reminds me that I'm alive. They have it all—slower crushing heavy parts, gnarly pick slides, thundering bass, powerful fast d-beats, ear-piercing guitar leads, eerie clean parts and strange vocal layouts that accent the songs perfectly. The vocals themselves are a bit more their own style with three singers that are giving it their all for every syllable as if it might be their last breath. They also have brutal double-kick, which gives certain parts the bite they need to set them apart from their predecessors. The first song starts with a three second clean guitar intro that almost leads you to believe that you have a while to relax, but then the song slams in, much earlier than one might expect, and knocks you on your ass. And it's non-stop brutality from then on. This is great! The first song goes directly into the second song and for the remainder of the record there is never more than a second gap between songs. I like my hardcore like this, with no time to breathe—there's no time to waste and every second counts, FUCK, I want to live my life like this!... and I'm able to, due to the inspiration I get from bands like this. This is one of my top three of the year and it's only a 7". I can't wait to hear a full-length from these guys. Fuck, I want to put it out. I'm stoked on this band (obviously). Oh, I think they could benefit from a slightly better recording, although this one is not bad by any means. Fans of HHIG—get this now! -s

(this is on a German label, so I'll give that address for the Europeans and the band's address for the yanks:) Yellow-Dog Box 550208, 10372 Berlin Germany / Diallo PO Box 1004 Windsor CT 06095

Some of my favorite stuff happens in the fourth song, where they complement the all-out craziness with some more haunting breaks. Political lyrics (in Spanish, with explanations in English too) covering

JACK FROST'S TOP TEN DIY PUNK PERFORMANCES SEEN IN ALLEYS, BUSY INTERSECTIONS, GAZEBOs, AND OTHER FUN LOCATIONS

1. 1,000+ Membered Highway-Object Orchestra — *FTAA Protests in Quebec City*
2. Infernal Noise Brigade — *On the streets of Olympia*
3. Stale Piss — *Under a gazebo at the Flying Circus convergence*
4. Sicarii — *in an Olympia intersection*
5. The Intima — *In an Olympia intersection*
6. Nerdvana — *An illegal alley show in Olympia*
7. A band whose name I never knew (they vanished as quickly as they appeared!) — *Spontaneous park performance at the Republican National Convention 2000 protest in Philadelphia*
8. Tras de Nada — *At a Chicago squat*
9. Terror 2000 — *at Church of the Dark Lord in Chicago*
10. Platter of Cakes — *at the Church of the Dark Lord in Chicago*

multinationals, nationalism, violent dancing, other sources of injustice... I first saw this band play one of the last His Hero Is Gone shows, and they later turned up in my life to rescue me from the sterile atmosphere of an oversized hardcore fest in Belgium, transforming everything for the few minutes of their set—suddenly the squatters, anarchists, and feminists appeared out of the crowd, to have a wonderful time moshing together. -b
Don't Belong. Apdo. 8035, 33200 Xixon, Spain

EMPLOYER, EMPLOYEE "SIC [SIC]"

CD: This is total A.D.D. chaos. I initially thought As the Sun Sets meets Converge with vocals via Cradle of Filth but then realized that they're doing stuff that is mostly their own. The recording isn't as clear as it could be so it quickly turns into a big mess. The lyrics are poetic and vague—in fact, they're so vague that I can't figure out what the fuck they're trying to get at with any of these songs. The packaging is equally strange—totally computer-generated with weird geometric shapes and other imagery that I'm just not comprehending. The music and the packaging work great together, I'll give them that much. If you're into that spastic, A.D.D., part-part-part-part-part-kind of sound you have a new favorite band. -s

Robodog Records 12001 Aintree Lane Reston, VA 20191

ENDSTAND "FIRE INSIDE" 10": It's the irrepressible, ever-active Endstand, with another eight major key punk rock hits brimming with sincerity and enthusiasm. I say "hits" not because they're getting up there in the pop charts, but because these guys know how to write songs—yes, that's right, real songs with individual

personalities, catchy choruses, and streamlined structure! They're a little like the Ramones, in that there's one thing they do really well, and they're hell-bent on exploring every corner of that little space, but you can't blame them, since they are good at it and there can never be enough good songs in the world. Anyway, despite the major key, which is basically my musical nemesis, the raw energy, screaming vocals, and occasional melodic leads

keep me connected to this. And, for all ye of little faith, the mighty Umlaut is on their thanks list—of course! -b
Combat Rock Industry, P.O. Box 139, 00131 Helsinki, Finland

FILTH OF MANKIND "THE FINAL CHAPTER" CASSETTE:

This is a modern band that plays old style crust. Judging by the packaging and band photo I assumed that this band would sound like the Amebix and I wasn't too far off. I'd have to say that they tend to lean towards sounding metal a bit more than the Amebix though. This band hails from Poland and their lyrics are in their own language instead of English, which is refreshing. There are English translations of the songs and they are some of the better apocalyptic crust lyrics that I have read: "no one cares to admit that the helm is broken, blinded they count on salvation in the lifeboats, meanwhile like rats they fight..." "I'm suffocating in a concrete jungle without sun or rain, locked inside walls, I'm suffocating, breathing in lead, in an endless traffic jam on the road to nowhere." The vocals sound somewhat similar to those of Zygoté, although a bit rougher, with lots of reverb and echo. The songs are generally pretty long and hypnotic with driving bass and drums, chunking guitars with melodic parts in between, synthesizer here and there, and atmospheric noise samples at some points. If you're into bands like the Amebix, Axegrinder, Zygoté, etc., I would suggest checking this out. -s
Scream Tapes/ Pawel Rzoska / PO Box 118/ 80 470 Gdansk 45/ Poland

FROM ASHES RISE—1ST LP AT THE WRONG SPEED: I'd definitely have to say that I'm a fan of these guys. I've seen them play several times and they were always

great, even the time when they were sick. I heard their second LP when I was traveling in Europe over a year ago and I remember it being pretty impressive. When I returned home a few months later I wrote to the band and requested a review copy—of course, I was also trying to get a free record out of the deal. In any case, they never got back to me so I've decided to review their first record at the wrong speed—a much slower version of it at 33 revolutions per minute instead of 45.

This must be the His Hero Is Gone LP that was never released. From Ashes Rise normally play pretty fast, have high pitched vocals and aren't tuned ridiculously low (I believe they're playing in D when the record is playing at the correct speed) so when it's all slowed down, it doesn't sound totally unnatural. It's actually quite good. In fact, some of the parts even sound better at the wrong speed. So, if you own this record try it yourself. -s

From Ashes Rise 7038 Bonnavent Dr. Nashville, TN 37076

THE GOONIES "CD": In high school I attended a show by a band made up mostly of close friends, who despite their short life recorded two or three amazing thrashing punk songs. That show, which happened in our friend's Lindze's apartment with people flying off the couches, friends hugging, everyone screaming along, the police showing up with video camera, then leaving so we could finish, was a mark for our community and a great band we didn't even have to share with the world. The Goonies seem to serve a similar function in their scene in Massachusetts. The documentation of the time and space of those moments with their self titled release must mean a great deal to the community around them.. The CD comes with a seven-inch sized booklet made up of written contributions from the band and their friends, the lyrics interspersed throughout. It is reminiscent of Reversal of Man's efforts with their *Revolution Summer* CD in which they attempted something similar. The writers address, living outside the constraining expectations of a conventional life, rape (including male same-sex rape), critical analysis of world economic policy, personal antedates of wandering city streets, some sound poetry (!?!), growing older in punk, straight edge and more. All the contributions are thoughtful and come across as sincere. We can do nothing but applaud a band that goes that very critical extra length in attempting to communicate beyond the music and lyrics, and the Goonies efforts are quite successful and well considered. There is even a great Nietzsche quote in the inside of the cover. Now for the music: The intro to the first song sounds almost like the beginning of a guitar-heavy 80's pop anthem, but once the song kicks in there is an early thrash punk sound that the Goonies are trying for, something like the first Suicidal Tendencies record; but they also mix in some horns and

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something like ska-punk (I promise that is not intended as an epithet!) The Voodoo Glow Skulls tried a similar sound, but the Goonies pull it off with a lot more energy and heart. You know, the singer sounds like Sam from Born Against on the first song! The next song sounds a bit like the Dead Kennedys. The third song is more ska based, and turns in something of a punk anthem. The lyrics are mostly straight forward: dealing with the rape of a loved one, frustrated youth, straight edge and consumerism and fit well with the music. The next song sounds like one of those short and to the point Descendents songs. Their straight-edge song (which they are retiring) again starts with ska, transitions to punk—Inside Front favorites Otis Reem come to mind, their song “The Sophomore” maybe. The band thrashes through “No More” and comes to the last studio song of the album (of which there are seven) “Consumed”—which is the best written, the horns are really well integrated here, the transitions make a lot of sense, everyone seems a bit more comfortable with their instruments; and it has great lyrics about rethinking the values were given by our society and finding better ways to communicate, love, and live. Most of the tracks were recorded in a single evening, the energy really comes across from that. But the recording and mix suffered some, it's quite muddled in places. The Goonies have set themselves up for a great follow up. “Consumed” shows that they can grow as songwriters while maintaining that energy of the ska/punk sound that gave them their start. The last track is 18 minutes of a live show recorded in a basement. The recording—well, the recording sounds like it was recorded live in a basement! But I think it was worth including for a couple of reasons. One, you can get an idea of the energy of a Goonies show (I saw one about 2 and half years ago, and loved it), it's probably a great document for anyone who was at the show. Two, it's great to hear what the band has to say between songs—bands trying to communicate, hell yeah! And three, they play some new songs (for which they included an additional lyric sheet) and confirm for me that the Goonies are moving in some awesome directions! —B-Side High Score Records – no address! Try writing the band at: The Goonies c/o Kevin Driscoll, Box 368, 500 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA, 01615

HEADWAY “” CD: Oh, Headway—the terrible tragedy of it all. In 1998 or so, they were probably the most creative and challenging band working in French

punk rock/hardcore. They were gifted with deep-seated soul, fearless artistic curiosity, undeniable creativity; I even saw them play an Acme cover and pull it off perfectly. Yet no one succeeded in getting them into a studio, and the moment passed. This is the feeble trace of the final incarnation of Headway, somewhat later, as an experimental instrumental jazz band, pure and simple. The music is still soulful and the creative risk-taking ambitious—it's just not recognizable as anything that ever proceeded from the hardcore community. The material here varies from soft-lit, sometimes-haunting evening music to more frenetic, chaotic departures. The recording is

music and laser sounds. In case you didn't know, Star Wars is totally crucial. The last track has clean, sung vocals, which don't really grab me, but the rest of the album is good. My, um, associate says these dudes look like ads for sportswear, so I guess civilization will be toppled by guys in Adidas running suits. I thought black Carharts were the uniform for the revolution. Someone better tell Heaven Shall Burn. Hell, I'll settle for anything at this point, but, for some reason, the idea of kids humming metal riffs as they set a McDonald's on fire appeals to me more than the idea of those same kids humming David Roviks or Against Me songs. One question: where are the d-beats? Mother Culture, look out... you're about to get windmilled. —xb Life Force Records, P.O. Box 938, Chemnitz, Germany

GLORIA CUBANA'S TOP TEN PATHS TO THE 4TH DIMENSION

1. Gogol Bordello live in Carrboro, NC, March, 2003
2. Interpol, Turn On the Bright Lights and live in Carrboro, December 2002
3. Art by Yasmina Reza, performed in Chapel Hill, NC, February 2002
4. Voyage Around My Room by Xavier de Maistre
5. Drums & Tuba live, Carrboro, August, 2002
6. The Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacobs
7. A History of Reading by Alberto Manguel
8. Second Nature by Michael Pollan
9. The Wau-Wau Sisters live a couple of times in 2002
10. The best salad dressing in the world: Blend together 1 cup canola oil, 1/3 cup cider vinegar, 1/4 cup soy sauce, 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil, 1 tablespoon minced dried shitake mushrooms, and 1 1/2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds.

excellent and complements everything they do nicely. My only complaint, besides my above-mentioned regret that so much of what they did at their peak has been lost to us, is the same complaint I have with almost all jazz recording: since there is no vocalist, it's somehow hard for me (you may not have this problem) to connect intimately with the music. It sounds great, it's soaked in mood and feeling, but I feel like I'm listening to something outside me, rather than within me. —b

Stonehenge c/o Christophe Mora, 21 Rue des Brosses, 78200 Magnanville, France

HEAVEN SHALL BURN

“WHATEVER IT MAY TAKE” CD: Pretty straightforward metal, with lyrics about various political movements, defending nature, and personal strength and conviction. Like many bands in this genre, it's pretty heavy on the personal conviction part (“they will never extinguish my flame”), evoking the tired image of the lone vegan warrior struggling in a world of impurity. If you liked Arkangel or Undying, you will probably like this band. At The Gates immediately comes to mind, but I don't mind that. The intro sounds like a sample from Star Wars, with creepy

HERDS AND WORDS

CASSETTE: This represents a much earlier stage in this band's development from the one covered elsewhere in this issue. This is basically a selection of neo-jazz songs with drums, guitar, bass clarinet, and a few other instruments (is that an accordion, or a harmonica, or what?), with occasional whimsical vocals. Most of the musical themes they later applied in their less music-centered performances appear here, and there's a little clapping and yipping and craziness, but

it's nothing like the atmosphere of what they

KYLESA “” CD: Kylea is one of the best sounding bands that played in my basement. The members of Kylea have been playing in great bands for years and years and it shows. Live, they're tight and loud and totally succeed in creating a dark and urgent mood in the room. Recorded, they're fucking amazing—layers upon layers of down-tuned guitars (A-flat, believe it or not), one of the best bass tones I've yet to hear—super low end but really clear at the same time—pulsing single-kick drums that are always doing something unexpected but steady, layers of high pitched male vocals and super-guttural female vocals and even a bit of singing, and crazy samples, effects petals and studio magic throughout the entire record. The musicianship and songwriting are expert—they seem to have spent much time trying different possibilities to perfectly craft each part and each song (and album) as a whole. I normally wouldn't like a band like this—there is not a single d-beat to be found on this record, in fact it's all pretty mid-tempo—I think maybe it's even metal, but I'm not sure. But there is something mesmerizing, passionate and hypnotic about this record that keeps me listening to it again and again. Kylea is doing something unique and vital and I'd suggest giving them a listen. —s Prank PO Box 410892 San Francisco, CA 94141-0892

did with this stuff a few months later. The recording isn't exactly murky, but everything does sound like it's happening far away, which is the opposite of everything I've seen them do. You'll be hard-pressed to find one of these in any distro, I bet.
try writing them at their address printed in the interview section

HOPELESS DREGS OF HUMANITY "REVOLUTIONARY ROCK

APOCALYPSE CD: This CD starts off with an on-site sound clip of people yelling those protest chants that I never participate in cuz I'd feel like a fucking sheep: "What do we want? Revolution! When do we want it? Now!" and "Whose streets? Our streets!" The music comes in with a sleazy rock riff and snotty vocals. This is definitely not my thing, but at least they are good at it. It's tight and the bass lines are impressive. The recording quality is decent with the exception of the vocals sitting too loud in the mix which is rather unfortunate as they're somewhat annoying. The name of this record is quite appropriate—this is anarchist party music. The rest of the CD sounds somewhere between pop punk and street punk with a touch of rock and roll. The lyrics are super political but light-hearted at times with lines like "What muthafuckin' time is it? It's time for revolution!" and "There's nothing more macho then filling bunnies full of lead." Like I said, this isn't my thing, but I think they're doing a great service for the punk community. Much like Propagandi, I can totally see some high school kid, who is into bullshit bands like NOFX, getting really into this and then flipping to the back of the booklet to find a list of about twenty different anarchist and activist organizations and/or web-sites to check out. These seem to be good kids. Oh, there is a fabulous collage on the back of the CD worth checking out. -s

*Ever Reviled Records PO Box 1904
 New Brunswick, NJ 08903-1904*

HUMAN RACIST "" DEMO

CD: This starts out with two out-of-tune guitars feeding back and continues to be out of tune for the remainder of the CD. This rocks pretty hard at times with fast parts, crusty vocals and decent breakdowns. It's nothing really out of the ordinary, just typical modern crust. The only distinguishing quality it possesses is this strange drum beat that comes in every time it sounds like there would be a d-beat otherwise—the snare and kick

are opposite of where they typically would be placed. The drummer is not bad at all so it's hard to tell if it's intentional or if he/she hasn't been exposed too much of the d-beat hardcore that they are trying to sound like. This, however, is a plus, since everything else this band does is pretty ordinary. Human Racist sound like they could be a pretty good band down the road if they find a bit of their own flavor, tune up and maybe change their name. This has good energy. -s
humanracist_wv@yahoo.com

IN RUINS OF "" 7: The whole downtuning thing has totally fucked up my life as a record reviewer. I this is the third record in the row I've listened to all the way through on one speed before concluding I probably had it set wrong. Anyway—leave it to the Swedes to get a great, mean recording, thanks to their socialized arts establishment and so on. This sounds thick, mean, and clear all at once; it flatters the music well. They're playing the hardcore that falls on the fast side of the slower spectrum, if that

LACK "BLUES MODERNE; DANOIS EXPLOSIFS" CD²: There is a beautiful part in the first song where the guitars are working furiously, the drums driving everything along and everyone comes to a full stop; only the vocalist comes back in for a moment, his screams torn but controlled—the rest of the band comes back in, but with a surprising shift in tone, almost a moment of reflection drawn out a bit before tearing into the rest of the song. The band's first LP does an excellent job of creating a tone of despair and hope, musically and lyrically throughout the record. I really can't convey enough how powerful it is lyrically! The band has an amazing grasp of the English language and engages in some very philosophical ideas made ready and pertinent to our times. I can't fault them for not singing in their native language, considering their command of English. Part of one song is in Danish, that works really well; and Lack goes where so many hardcore bands never dare to go and sings about sex. It's refreshing to feel a real humanness present amongst the very serious political and social critiques they develop throughout the record. "Achilles and the Tortoise" is a harangue on the danger of just singing these songs without any consequence. ("And if this is not the world for me than I will set it on fire and watch it burn 'til there is nothing but ashes left/ I can't believe my eyes/ I thought we were changing the times/ Are we changing the times?/ And are these flames of discontent really firestorms to purify?/ Have we lost our will to tear down the wall, burn the flags, and start again?/ History shall judge us/ We're history.") This song begins with a quick build, rolling snare, tight guitar and as they come they characteristically take you to a slightly different place than you awaited, in this case a clean guitar riff climbing step by step up the neck over an almost mechanical drumming. It has an intense effect, which they come back later to in the song to push its extreme: Thomas' voice dripping with anger and question and final proclamation as he sings over a deep open bass string the last words of the song, "we're history." "Solipsist Letter to the World" is probably my favorite song on the record. The opening guitar sound feels just like a touch, something like the beginning of a Godspeed lullaby (and which appears again unexpectedly several songs later), but the drumbeat that comes in is bouncy, almost new wave-ish, the band waiting to thrash you around the first corner. The bass guitar I think is mixed best in this song, (sometimes the other guitar is mixed too high throughout the record—but generally they sound great; they are quick and scratchy, but quite distinct in the mix, which seems characteristic of many Scandinavian Hardcore-Punk bands, like Separation or Intensity). But the bass has a couple great moments in this one. There is a nice little break down, smooth, but keeping the song moving, where Thomas sings in Danish—hell except for the man screaming in Danish on this part, this sounds a whole lot like Joy Division! The last part of the song is the only time that shows off on the record the fact that Thomas can do something like actually sing, as in notes, and does so over an energetic hardcore-swinging-guitar part, sounding like his heart is breaking. Musically I would say this record feels in a lot of ways like a logical follow up to Refused's "Songs to Fan the Flames of Discontent" LP. There is no wacky electronica, but there is a fair amount of playing with the hardcore formula and experimentation, while maintaining the energy and focus. The great thing about that Refused record was how rooted it was in Hardcore and yet so unique to the band, and Lack has managed something similar here. There is a great part at the end of "Even the Most Honest of Emotions turns in to a Commodity" where Thomas is pacing his growl over the bass rumbling like thunder, while in the back ground an atmosphere, not quite noise, not quite a recognizable tone, builds slowly, eventually a drumbeat joins the thundering bass, the tone is brought to the fore, and they march all of this off, the haunting echoes left. Lack goes on to tackle body image, consumerism, marred heroes, and our attempts to assemble something meaningful in this shattered world. But right through to the end with "Great Russian Nihilists (the Truth Hurts...)" the themes of hope and despair are the focus of the record. ("So I'm caught in between hating a world that I do not want and another world I cannot have/ But I demand the impossible/ because its possible... Defy this deathculture and crawl out of this grave/ I will be a demon to you/ My wings come of the soil/ Fierce eyes shall smile as I lead you to your scaffold/ Come now, insignificant mortal/ Don't give up/ Don't give in"). There is so much to discover from this record (including a beautiful, thoughtful insert/ manifesto), and though its now two years ago since its release, it is still one of the most important hardcore records out there for our time. I'm very excited to witness what Lack will bring us in the future. And like the last song broken off, unfinished on the Trial "Our These are Lives?" record, Lack's final notes break up, incomplete, part of a song of which the last has not yet been heard. - B-Side
Nova Recordings/ Gladbach Str. 44/ 50672 Koeln/ Germany and in the USA thru Stickfigure Distro/ Po Box 55462/ Atlanta, GA/ 30308/ USA

² Graphic Designer's Apology: Honestly—who writes reviews this long without line breaks?! Argh!

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makes sense: the drums do that At the Gates one-two beat or beats I can imagine Botch (?) doing, not the speedy d-beats of the punk world, and the songs are spiced up with various breaks and transitions while maintaining essentially the same tone and tempo throughout. I wish the lyrics were a little easier to read (they've been artistically rendered in one great block of brushstrokes, without spaces between words), but as far as I can tell it they're pretty right on, arguing angrily in favor of d.i.y. hands-on politics and just being angry in general. -b
Black Star Foundation, Suite 757, 21165 Malmo, Sweden

KENJI "DEMONSTRATIONS '02"

CDR: This is packaged in a DVD case, which makes it pretty durable for a demo—it also means it takes up a lot of space. The recording on the first four songs somehow makes everything sound far away—but, now that I realize it's a live recording, I'm really impressed by how clear and well-balanced it is. This is competently played, energetic melodic punk rock, with an attitude that comes across in the gravelly singing (um, Hot Water Music or Planes Mistaken For Stars, maybe, for genre comparisons more so than individual similarities—though this is more rugged) and brash guitars. The lyrics are kind of vague, in that way that lyrics featuring poetic statements around pronouns ("I" and "you" a lot, with some "we" too, and one song filled with "her") often are in this genre. There's a part in the second song that surprised me, with drum rolls and double picking, that could almost have been played by the Amebix—that really helped spice this up for me. And then, hey, there's a feedback wasteland in the third song, and I'm starting to take this seriously! I'd really like to see this band play, they sound like they could really rock together in a tightly packed basement show. Yes, by the end of the fourth song, I'm a believer, and there are still five more tracks, older recordings, on here. Not only that—I'm starting to wish more bands would get good live recordings for their demos, instead of those studio recordings which can often be so clinical and dry. -b
P.O. Box 3441, Ventura, CA 93006

KEVES "NEM EVTETEK, HANEM MIALTATOK"

CD: God, this is just bad. They've been listening to way too much Shelter and Limp Biscuit. They do a lot of annoying guitar rhythms that sound almost like funk or something and there's time that the bass sounds like it's from Seinfeld or the Red Hot Chili Peppers. I'm not digging this at all. On some positive notes—the artwork is good, the words are in Hungarian, the recording is good, the musicianship is tight and impressive and they do a variety of different stuff (I just think it's all bad). Man, I feel bad writing shitty reviews, especially

since their thank-you list includes some of my friends in Hungary. My apologies. -s
[Editor's note: I remember being interested in these guys when I saw them play—they were doing some unusual stuff, and had distinctive personality. I don't remember Shelter or Limp Biscuit influences, but we'll have to trust Stef on this CD, as I haven't heard it. Out of all of us reviewers, she's the one who listens to Shelter, anyway!]
Nagy Laszlo, 9024 Győr, Babits M. 71—Hungary

THE LOUISVILLE ANARCHESTRA "TRIBUTE TO J20 BLACK BLOC"

CD: This is totally what I'm talking about! It's a d.i.y. experiment, at once self-indulgent and artistically liberating, connected explicitly to anticapitalist street

NOS SOMOS NADA "7": These are some of my friends who were in By All Means, and as far as I'm concerned they can do no wrong. They maintain the dark atmosphere their music had then, take on a singer with quite a fierce high shriek, and keep the heartfelt anarchist politics. If I had to find another comparison for the music, I'd have to say Concrete, Stef's favorite Italian band, only with more nervous energy and perhaps shorter songs. Phenomenal drumming, freight train double bass included, that complements the discordant guitars with perfectly-timed transitions. The packaging is lovely, exemplifying all the best qualities of a certain hands-on d.i.y. aesthetic with printing in red, yellow, and black, and rough-textured illustrations with a style all their own framing the text. The lyrics and explanations (Italian, with English translations) cover conflicts with the State and fascists in the ongoing struggle for freedom—the first one, "reduction of charge," about a court case that is dragged on by the "justice" system to terrorize an activist that they must eventually admit is innocent rings particularly true with me, as one of my friends is in the same situation right now (at least, I hope they'll fucking have to admit his innocence...). Oh yeah, like Dearborn S.S. and many of the other great punk bands of the last couple years, they've broken up, too, but this record is still worth finding on its own virtues. -b
Santa Sangre Discos, c/o Luca Mamone, Piazza P. Togliatti 9, 00030 Vallemartella, Roma, Italy... or write guitarist Matteo, who is lazy at letter-writing but a great person, at Matteo Verri, C.P. 6, Succ 7, 41100 Modena, Italy

resistance (the "J20 Black Bloc" was the masked bloc of anarchist militants that fucked things up at the inauguration of George Bush back in 2001). The concept (and the liner notes that expound on it) here is at least as important as the commodity itself: this is an experiment in process-centered, participatory music, intended to deconstruct the idea that art and activism are the domain of specialists. (One wonders, perhaps, why it would be necessary to release such a thing on CD; if

I had to answer for the creators, I would say 1. to drive those points home to everyone who encounters it, and 2. this isn't exactly mass-produced.) Musically, it's something of a cacophony: against a mumble of background instruments, clicks, taps, piano and woodwind notes, and occasional bangs follow one another in arbitrary flourishes that have some personality, if no pattern. A friend of mine speculated that the author(s?) of this project had just copied some obscure Sun Ra free jazz experiment (it is just a burned CDR, after all—and the recording sounds suspiciously high-quality, not to mention the playing somber, if not actually skilled) and sent it out into the world as their own work, so as to save the trouble of actually having to record an improvisation with others; if that is the case, and this is just an elaborate prank pulled on us all, all the better—I'm all for those, too! I don't think this was ever seriously distributed, but I'll bet the address still works; you could write and demand one of your own. Why not? -b
P.O. Box 4964, Louisville, KY 40204-0964

MALEFACTION "CRUSH THE DREAM"

CD: This band is like Doom. No, they don't sound anything like the British crust band, but like Doom, you only need to hear one song. If you've heard one, you've heard them all. And that one song is pretty fucking good, but Christ—the same song twenty three times?! This band plays super fast thrash-metal-punk much like Phobia. Each song, with very few exceptions, starts with a blast beat, does something else for one to three seconds and then returns to the blast beat for the remainder of the song. The recording is pretty clear, the musicianship is not lacking by any means, but where's the creativity? I really can't believe that they do this for twenty-three songs. I'd imagine that this band is fucking incredible live, but for me at least, does not translate on to record very well... which actually is exactly what I think about Phobia. Fans of relentless blast beat brutality check this out. -s
G7 Welcoming Committee (see Swallowing Shit review for address)

MANIFESTO JUKEBOX "DESIRE"

CD: As strange as it sounds, my first reaction to this is that it sounds somewhere between Rites of Spring and the first Foo Fighters album. This is good. It's mid-tempo dirty rock with a ton of emotion, good short guitar solos and vocals that are very similar to those of Guy, from the aforementioned Rites of Spring (and Fugazi) except a bit more melodic at times. The recording is great for them—any clearer and they might sound marketable, or something, like the aforementioned Foo Fighters. The guitars play a lot of open chords and then harmonize over the bass, which is usually

holding down the song structure along with the drums. That's a great formula for rock music that has been tested time and time again and works very well. These songs do allow for the bass to take the lead at times though, which is good because otherwise I might forget it is there. Wow... As I continue to listen I notice more and more cool guitar harmonies happening. The cover is a picture of some city with fire superimposed in back of it, which is amusing since it is very similar to the Umlaut record that is on the same label that I believe came out some time later. I wonder if Umlaut ripped off their cover image just as they rip off everything else. Hmmm. [Editor's note: Combat Rock Industries just bit the bullet after that and made their logo a fire in flames—good for them!] This CD is just under a half an hour long, perhaps the perfect length as to keep up the momentum and not start to get boring. It's good all the way through. This band is great—I wish I hadn't missed seeing them play when they toured the states last year. [Editor, again: P.S., Stef, not only did you miss them on tour in the USA, our band played with them in Finland and you missed them that night too! Oops!] —s
Combat Rock Industry, PL 139, 00131 HKI, Finland

for me to connect myself to this music as a human being—the only signs of organic life throughout are brief, distorted samples of people screaming, and even those evoke horror movies and techno music rather than actual human beings. I harbor no great love for that fucker Baudrillard, but in cases like these he was right—there is no reality here, just references to references, reconstructions of constructions: it's like the sound of machines talking to each other, using human beings as an interface at best. My favorite parts are when the double bass and stranger computer sounds are dominating, but Ministry still did it better for me. —b
Hai Nguyen Dinh, Tandstadveien 10, 3140 Borgheim, Norway—though he encourages us to use email instead: assbasher@altavista.com

NOTHING TO PROVE “ERASE THE METRONOME” CD: There's a late '90's chaos-hardcore thing going on here, maybe drawing a little on Botch or Converge, without any of the unpleasant masculine energy that often characterized bands in that genre. There's some interesting sample collagework done here and there, the song construction and the parts themselves are complex, the playing and recording are competent, the vocals even cover plenty of ground between speaking, singing, and

them.” The layout is fascinating and original: photos drawing out the terrifying absurdity of death row, and connecting it to the emptiness of modern/techno-slave life in every context, the capital punishment that begins at birth. —b

Nothing to Prove, Pion Lucien, 9 rue de Montbouton, 25230 Dasle, France

PANOPTIKON [?] “[?]” 7’: Fucking crazy! I've had this beat up 7” sitting in or around the review box since—I'm afraid—some time in 1999 or 2000; I think I brought it back from New Jersey on some long-ago tour. I wasn't planning on reviewing it, I just threw it on out of curiosity—and here's the deal, it's fucking soundalike Bad Brains! Seriously! Reggae that merges into Rock-for-Light-era noisy punk, H.R.-sounding vocalist, lyrics that appear to show heavy Rasta influence, the whole thing—and it's not even bad, not at all! Now, this will probably be a challenge to track down, but I think it's worth mentioning here, since there are so few records in this style. I could use another whole genre of bands following the leads Bad Brains set out on that Rock for Light record, myself. —b
10 Garvey Drive, Monroe Twp., NJ 08831

PARAGRAF 119 “MUSIC TIL

ULEMPE” 7’: This may not even be this band's latest release, and it's not especially current (I can't tell how long ago it was recorded, because the band opted to include a page on legal rights in confrontations with the pigs in their home nation of Denmark in place of more conventional liner notes), but this is such a classic example of great pro-direct-action punk rock that it has to get coverage here. The cover alone says it all: masked people chiseling up the concrete (yes, to make stones to throw at the pigs!), something I've only been lucky enough to be present for once in my life so far—what a good time that was! The centerfold, too, is classy—a picture split down the middle: what we must do—on the left, burning franchises, trashed cop cars, molotov cocktails, masks and riot gear—and what we want—on the right, gardens, squatted buildings open to the public, communal campfires and friendship. I saw a 12” by this band that had band photos of them in it—each of them was of a different member getting aggressively arrested! No rehased

youth-crew crowd shots for these kids! Six songs, in Danish with English translations, cover subjects such as not forgetting the injustices we've suffered at the hands of the State, breaking their monopoly on violence, and outrageous police brutality and lies—that last one insults the Danish police press secretary by name, reminiscent of the

PLEDGE ALLIANCE “TRUMMER EINER ZERBORSTENEN WELT” CD: Out of the wave of passionate, adventuresome, anticapitalist bands that appeared in Europe a couple years ago inspired by a mixture of Refused and more metal d.i.y. hardcore, Pledge Alliance have probably recorded the best record yet—this one. It's hard to get complex metal to convey emotion—usually the polish and technicalities take the place where the soul would otherwise be—but this has all the urgency and immediacy that the rare great metal album has. Imagine, if you can, double bass, guitar leads, blastbeats once again expressing human desperation, desire, fear, fury! It helps a lot that they utilize the full range of octaves and dynamics, from heavy driving parts to high melodies and harmonies to heartbreakingly beautiful feedback, like a mourner's wail. And their vocalist is going all out, holding nothing back—he's got a powerful deep scream and a range of expression inside it, and there are frequent breaks in which he is basically reciting poetry. These speaking parts would sound melodramatic if they weren't so earnestly delivered—you have to believe in him, he obviously means it. The lyrics come across the same as his delivery: they are indeed poetry, and they could come across as overwrought if it wasn't so clear that he really feels them, really means every word. This kind of sincere idealism and fire makes me feel like we can fucking make it—it's such a gift to hear someone sing like it matters, dream like it's possible, sing and scream and dream until everything that matters is possible. Anyway, the recording and mix are fierce and hard-hitting, complementing the music perfectly. If I was going to suggest any possible route for improvement for here, I would encourage them to compose less conceptually, more traditionally; their songs are good, but the structures might actually complement their soul more if they were less complex, more organic (think old blues songs, rather than “Justice for All”-era Metallica)—a sudden transition from one part to another that has nothing to do with it is something that should happen about once a record, if you ask me.

To those with better Deutsch than me, I apologize if I got the name of the record wrong—handwriting isn't easy to read in a foreign language. Not that the layout is inaccessible in any other way. —b

Erdkampfs Style, Brucknerstr. 24, A-8010 Graz, Austria

NEXT LIFE “RED END” 7’: “Songs are made using Amiga and distorted guitar,” the back cover of this gatefold reads, and clearly Amiga is some kind of computer program for making music that sounds like it could be used for an '80's video game soundtrack. The electric guitar, for its part, sounds a little tinny. There aren't many points of contact

screaming; all they really lack are unique, unforgettable song compositions, but if you listen to this a few times and get to know everything by heart that doesn't really matter. The lyrics are in English and cover general anti-commodification, anti-hierarchy, and gay-positive subjects; one of my favorite lines: “the toys prepare themselves for the cruel world awaiting

review

Rambo song that addresses the police commissioner who beat up one of my closest friends and then charged him with assault. The music is pretty standard up-tempo punk rock, with dual scratchy vocals, not especially outstanding; but if these kids keep it up on the action front, I'll get their records just to have them around as conversation starters. Oh—and what does "Paragraf 119" refer to, you ask? It's the section of Danish penal code forbidding assault upon employees of the State, such as police officers. -b
Paragraf 119, Box 578, 2200 Copenhagen, Denmark—assuming they're not in prison by the time you read this

PISTOLS AT DUSK "DEMO

2003" MP3: Please do the following things in order.

1. Get access to a computer that has both internet access, and a comfortable and ergonomically correct chair.
2. Sit in the chair and turn on the computer.
3. Open an internet browser window.
4. Go to www.lonelybullet.com/pistolsatdusk/
5. Download all four demo songs by clicking on the song titles individually.
6. Listen to the songs.
7. Check www.wordsasweapons.com/punkpistols.htm and read the interview I did with Bill from Pistols at Dusk and also check out the lyrics to the first song.
8. Repeat step 6 until head falls off and rolls under the kitchen table.
9. Turn off computer.
10. Stand up and walk into kitchen.
11. Kneel and attempt to find head.
12. Reattach head using any necessary means. ---If you do all of the above, I promise you both an adventure and a great time, even before you bust out the duct tape to reconnect your severed head to your body. This demo will have that effect though, I promise you. Every once in a while a band comes along that just kills me... leaves me wanting to pound nails with my fists, scream until my voice bleeds, and makes it impossible to sit still. Pistols At Dusk is that band right now, and I see them poised to leave the world in flames. The four songs deal with personal heartache, hardcore values, and despair, and I have no doubt that Bill At Dusk could scream about anything and make me feel like I was ready to jump out of my skin. The music is guitar driven, but not in terms of predictable riffs... it is more an assemblage of emotions transferred through musicianship into constant motion. That is the one thing which just keeps hitting so hard throughout this CD: it is constantly changing direction and tempo without ever losing for a second the focus and intensity which makes the

RETORICA "1ST COMMUNIQUE" CD: This is another brilliant, courageous experiment destined to be forgotten by the punk community because it wasn't released by some popular North American group—but if you can get your hands on it, the potential still exists that you could have a new secret favorite record of your own to steal strange inspirations from with which to confound your fellow bandmates. The language almost doesn't exist yet for me to review this—it's that unprecedented, that out there. Musically, this is a collage of live home-recordings and electronic noise, wound together and layered to form sprawling, spare soundscapes; there are guitars, drums, feedback, obscure media samples, the whine and distorted crunch of electronic signals, and occasional yelling riot-grrl vocals in the background—but combined, it takes on a new form with a strange beauty and alien aesthetic of its own: it sounds like a time capsule sent back from some alternative future. The packaging is a very important part of what's going on here: it's all hand-cut, -printed, and -assembled, screenprints and stolen x-rays and all, and once again the medium is the message here: you-can-d.i.y., process not product, liberation through contestation of cultural forms as well as political and social structures. The liner notes are clever and conversational, while drawing on the heritage of hyper-radical writing from the Situationists to *Fight Club* to present the whole project in a light that is at once personal and uncompromisingly insurrectionist. The same people are involved in making this who were in *Libertinagem*; I wish I knew what they are up to now.

If I had to think about other records that could possibly be along the same lines, the only two I'd hazard would be the audio Hunter/Gatherer CDR, and the first Countdown to Putsch release. But now that I think about it, what I really love about this record is not the music itself, but the spirit of fearless experimentation in which it was obviously undertaken. Maybe you don't need a copy of this record—maybe you just need to get together with some friends for a one-month thinktank in which you undertake to create an alien music of your own. But hearing this and looking through these inserts, or at least hearing about it, that it exists and can be done, might help a lot. -b
Collectivo Retorica, R. Paulo Simoni, 54, B. Horizonte, M6

each song and the entire disc so powerful. The screams are from the guts... from deep in the guts... and when on track two Bill lets out "I have only one last wish / I hope you fucking burn" all I know is that I am ready to light the goddamn flames, regardless of who he is talking about. You can't help but get swept up in this thing. I have added this demo to my top ten list of records to own in order to laugh uncaringly in the face of the apocalypse. I recommend you do the same. After all, you can't beat the price. And while you are on the web, sitting there next to the kitchen headless and stoked, contact bill_baker@attbi.com for more information on the band and their future plans. -JUG
Greg provides only internet addresses, so we can imagine this is an entirely virtual band.

PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS

"FUCK WITH FIRE" CD: I had only heard one of their songs before on a mix tape and I remember it being good. And they have such a great name, so I was excited to pick this one out of the review box. This Denver band sounds like they should be from D.C. The closest things I can compare them too are Rites of Spring, "In on the Killtaker" era Fugazi and a little bit of Nation of Ulysses, but they definitely have something modern sounding about them too. This is heavy punk rock and

roll type stuff with sleazy, nasally vocals that I find just fine, although I know that vocal style can annoy the shit out of some of my friends. The guitars are pretty heavy sounding with a lot of distortion and on the more laid back parts, it sounds like any other band would have backed off of it a bit, but they haven't, and it gives them their own sound. I think most other bands that play this style of music would have chosen a much weaker guitar sound and I give *Planes* props for trying this out and in my opinion, succeeding. Come to think of it, the bass has a bit of distortion on it too, I think. Hmm. Think of that sort of His Hero Is Gone wall-of-guitar sound that a lot of heavy hardcore bands are going for (including my own) but being applied to mid-tempo, up-beat, almost poppy rock songs. And the songs have a lot of obvious emotion and energy. This is pretty good. -s

No Idea Records P.O. Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604

PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS "KNIFE IN THE MARATHON" CD:

Stef says this band has one of the best names ever, and I'm

inclined to agree. I've been hearing about them forever, it seems, but I'm honestly pretty out of touch. This is pretty good emotional hardcore, somewhere between Hot Water Music and the Exploder. The more I listen to this, the more I like it, especially the 4th track, which is more ambient and brooding than the others. All 5 songs are well-written, and the lyrics aren't too abstract for my tastes (sorry, Jerome's Dream), just songs about love and trying to keep it. I give this one a thumbs-up. -xb
Deep Elm Records, P.O. Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236

POINT OF NO RETURN "IMPOSED FREEDOM, CONQUERED FREEDOM"

CD: This needs saying first: the layout of this record sets a new standard for great punk/hardcore layouts that I can only hope other bands will rise to themselves. In masterfully constructed juxtapositions of photos from the last two decades of international conflict, the tension between the fake freedom that the neo-liberal "first world" would enforce at the end of a gun and the freedom won by those courageous men and women who oppose it is dramatized—it's more eloquent than any words could be, and serves to perfectly

frame the lyrics; these draw* on the conflict in occupied Palestine, the struggle for agrarian reform, the injustice done political prisoners and all prisoners, and the twin faces of military and cultural imperialism to present a picture of a world in struggle between the dreams and solidarity of ordinary people and the heartlessness of their oppressors. A lengthy booklet (in Portuguese, translation on the internet somewhere) discussing the necessity of redefining such social constructs as straight edge (yes, PONR are a vegan straightedge band!) for oneself is also included—that text almost made it's way into the "straight edge" feature of this very magazine, in fact, but it was too long. And—no, I didn't forget—the music: PONR represent the (soy) cream of the crop of the dance-floor oriented, metallic hardcore bands that came out in the late '90's. Typically they alternate between slow, open chords and really sinister metal riffs, the rhythms switching up beneath them to bring out different aspects of each part. There are fast parts, too, which break things up nicely. The three singers sound like thunder over the cataclysm evoked by the music. The recording is thick and powerful, complementing everything perfectly; yes, everything is in place here. -b
Liberation, Caixa Postal 4193, Sao Paulo, SP 01061-970

REDENCION 9.11 "97-01" CD: At first, I couldn't put my finger on it, but then I figured out what's going on in the first couple tracks: it's like an emo/screamo band playing streetpunk/oi music! The third track is a little electronica experiment, and the fourth track could have been written by Fugazi, perhaps: rocking guitar and drums figure repeating, bass adding different colors to it, distorted speaking over it. As the record progresses, there are also places where they seem to be working from a more metallic hardcore tradition, or even old school hardcore; all this, through the aesthetic of their grainy, aggro-emo sound—and it all holds together better than you'd expect it to, thanks to that. Whoa, the eighth track is a free jazz break, although I'm not convinced they're serious about it. The lyrics, in Spanish with English translations, are a good mix of personal reflection and

POESTENKILL "[?]" DOUBLE CD: This comes from the same label and aesthetic as the "Apes of the Union" (?) CD I just reviewed above. The music, packaging, and entire aesthetic gives one the impression that these kids are doing everything they can to sabotage the functioning of the artists-who-play-music-and-release-it-on-CD system, without leaving it entirely. Everything about their presentation and music itself screams "inaccessible"—not in a tone of defiance, but of self-preoccupation, or perhaps simply distraction. This kind of spirit is healthy, and can open the way for much freer creative ventures than those that usually take place in our culturally conservative music scene, but it certainly makes my job as reviewer (let alone listener) hard, if not unrewarding. There was another CD in the review box, a long string of poorly recorded basement experiments, that at the time I took out because I couldn't even figure out from the packaging who the label or band were, but now I'm pretty sure it was these folks. Anyway, after that frustrated and not-so-promising introduction, here's the news: there's some great stuff in the music on these CDs! The first one begins with a very slow buildup, so by the middle of the song (many minutes into it) when the pace picks up it's actually really exciting. This is the first out of all the CDs in this vein that I'm really responding to—that's a relief! The rugged, improvised quality of the music—it sounds, in general, like a bunch of fucking maniacs at their first jam on instruments they haven't played for long, but without all the hesitance that usually characterizes such sessions—actually gives it an "anything can happen" quality that makes the songs come alive: it's like listening to punk bands from the first couple years of the genre. Also, there are vocals (yelling, singing, rough stuff) present, which really helps me connect with this as a human being. By the sixth track of the first CD, I'm in the groove with them enough that the jarring collage of backwards music is pulse-quickening, not annoying. Fuck, when the dark-atmosphered, post-metal/goth experiment comes in at the end, I'm a fucking believer—this is raw, real, over-the-top stuff! I'm just putting on the second disc right now, it begins with semi-human wailing unlike anything you'll hear from any genre-specific punk band... oh no, these fucking assholes! Just to make sure they weren't being too predictable, I guess, almost all 64 minutes of this second CD are composed of five minute-bursts of inarticulate wailing and moaning, a capella, broken up by minute after minute, track after track, of total silence. At the very end there's another fucking great, spooky, His-Hero-Is-Gone-meets-Godspeak-You-Black-Emperor! track, for those with patience—that lasts for a minute, before reverting to high-school-band-covering-Led-Zepplin chaos, and then back again for the stirring conclusion. I can get pretty pretentious myself, in my role as "music/art critic," but I'm definitely not in on what's going on here, if there is any method to the madness at all. But anyway, taken as one CD, there's some great stuff going on here—if you're considering getting a strange CD in a badly screenprinted piece of cardboard, for the sake of hearing some unearthly, non-traditional stuff, this is the one to try, for sure. -b
www.massivedistribution.com

political incitement. This is well-played music, but somehow I'm not finding a point of personal connection to it—maybe I've just reviewed too many records today. -b
Amor y Lucha, 6107 43rd Street, Riverdale, MD 20737 (www.amorylucha.org)

REVERSAL OF MAN

"DISCOGRAPHY" CD: Not a complete discography, this CD is comprised of 27 songs that were never released on CD, including their demo. Reversal of man were one of the screamy, energetic, socially conscious SXE bands of the mid—to late 90's, and, in my opinion, one of the best bands from that era. This disc came out a while ago, and if you were going to get it, you probably already have. For anyone who still likes Prevail, Inkwell, Hourglass, Frail, etc., and didn't manage to get all the Reversal of Man records, go get this. -xb

Schematic Records, dist. by No Idea, P.O. Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

SELFISH "BURNING SENSATION"

12": Yeeeeeaaah! This starts with a bang with an intro that packs all the punch and drama of the best Iron Maiden, finger-tapping leads and all. Once things get going, this is more Oi/street punk than Maiden, with guitar solos here and there to maintain the '80's metal presence. This is really urgent, intense stuff, though—it doesn't sound sentimental at all. The power and dirt in the mix are balanced at just the right proportions—and even the lyrics, where I can make them out, are positive, about seizing the day and so on. Where I can't make them out, they're more along the lines I was expecting: "Fight the fight dead people vomiting, right, no cry no tear from my dead eye—kill murder a sickly smile, just now as the fist bites!!!" Christ, every once in a while the vocalists sounds a bit like Roger Miret on old Agnostic Front albums... that's not too overwhelming, though, thankfully. What else remains to be said? Well, there are shouted backing vocals on the choruses, and the artwork harkens back to those halcyon days of early metal: full color, amateur illustrations of skulls, mysterious women with spiders, a naked winged bodybuilder angel with a flaming loincloth that makes the title appear a reference to venereal disease. And yes, these guys are Finnish, they're Finnish as fuck. -b

my friend who released this is so humble about his label that he just listed it as "available through Ebullition (P.O. Box 680, Goleta, CA 93116, USA)" on the cover

SHACKLES AWAIT "" 7":

Dark atmosphere, primitive overloaded recording, fuzzy guitars and roaring, guttural vocals. There are parts that start out sludgy and crunchy and slowly pick up speed (think "Cave In" on the *Gehenna 7"*), there are parts where the guitarists will hit one note on two strings at once and then bend one up, there's even a part where echo pedals are used by the guitarists during a spare, atmospheric part.

review

I don't know if they've been raised on Gehenna and His Hero Is Gone and, god forbid, Botch, or just on other bands that were, but that lineage is definitely present here. The recording, which seems to have been done in a cave with a boom box in front of the guitar amplifiers, doesn't interfere with the soul here—you know, "bad" recordings can sometimes preserve soul where cleaner ones would lose it. The last song in particular comes in with such a burst of noise and screams mangled by distortion and overload that I feel like I'm listening to some old Negative Approach bootleg or something—and it's great! The composers in this band know their minor keys, and there are dynamics enough to keep it interesting. The first line of lyrics is "force fed lies," so you can sketch out the rest of the content on those lines (although, and this may surprise some, the first place I remember hearing those words as lyrics was the last Agnostic Front record before their 1992 breakup, not some pre-Born Against band). The chorus they take their name from is in a song called "For Those About to Revolt... We Salute You!" Need I say more? —b

[Now another reviewer checks in on the same record:] This band played at my house a year or so ago and they were a lot of fun. They kept talking about their show the night before in which people kept trying to trade them drugs for merch. But not just any drugs—homemade science project drugs made with Robitussin that the locals had named "Voodoo." Apparently some local addict explained, "We drank straight 'tussin for about twelve years before we figured out how to extract the DSM. Now, we have Voodoo." This band is a ton of fun. We received their demo in the mail a few months before the show and it's fucking great. It made us super-stoked for their arrival. And live, they lived up to our expectations. This 7" however, despite its lovely hand-made packaging with silk-screened cover and free patches (with grenades on them!) does not excite me nearly as much as the demo tape. They play crusty hardcore, as many do, in the vein of His Hero with a variety of different tempos and cool guitar work, high and low screaming vocals and a lot of heavy parts. I'd write to them and ask for their demo! —s

These goddamn fucking assholes have no street address in here, just an email address, which, Luddite that I am, I am loath to list, but the slackers leave me no choice:
shacklesawait666@yahoo.com

THE SPECTACLE "10": Here's the old story, once more: Somewhere in some small town, far from anything hip or happening, a few bored teenagers find a record by some old punk band that has long since declared punk rock to be dead and meaningless. Maybe the town is San Diego, maybe it's Umea, Sweden, whatever, but no punk bands ever come through, so, inspired by the record and whatever others like it they can find, the kids make their own crazy punk rock, basing it on the stories they have made up to go with the impressions those first records gave them—and it's amazing, what they make, it becomes the most important thing in the world for them and then for everyone who encounters it. Suddenly the whole world is looking at their little dead-end corner, seeing it as the center of the cosmos; people start moving there in droves, whole battalions of copycat bands form, new generations found their own passionate life projects on the foundation of the music made by these former teenage nobodies. Eventually, under all this pressure, things cave in. "Punk is dead, dude," they all swear, and everyone moves away or tries to get on MTV or "grows up" and dies. But far away, far from all this action, in fact north of the arctic circle, at the northernmost tip of Norway, in Bodo, some kids have found a record left from this brief explosion... and punk rock is born to triumph again.

But let's talk about this record, specifically. This is a good fucking record! It's exactly what I want to see in a band's first release: the music is soulful, the packaging is extensive and original and includes lengthy essays about their intentions and politics (which I'd say are pretty damn close to the politics and intentions of, say, the people who do the magazine you're reading) as well as discussions of each song—and yes, they've released the whole thing themselves. The lyrics are stunning in some places: "let others scurry for cover—we rush to bear witness." For their sound, let me give the reference points you and I probably share: when I saw them play I thought of early Zegota, in that they were so unaffectedly passionate and earnest, pushing themselves like young maniacs, giving it their all; the guitarist, and possibly the vocalist, seem to listen to Undying—it comes out in some double-picked leads, especially, which all the same don't alter the much grittier, punker aesthetic of their sound (possibly influenced by His Hero Is Gone's recordings); the vocalist's painful, guttural delivery makes me think of Gehenna; I imagine, from their politics, that the interest Refused showed in Situationist thinking may have rubbed off some, too. But like any great record, this isn't just a mishmash of things other bands did better; indeed, no comparison to any of those great bands would be warranted if The Spectacle were just a second rate imitation of one or a few of them. No, they have that soul that makes bands matter. Now, there's a lot of fucking music out there in the world, and a lot of it sounds the same, while being generally uninspired, lacking that requisite soul—so you may have to listen to this a few times to recognize that it's of a different caliber than all that other stuff. But if you do, you'll be rewarded: you'll find these songs sticking with you as copycat hardcore doesn't, you'll find yourself reaching for it in times of intense emotion. Yes, this is a good record of real songs.

Or perhaps I'm telling this all wrong, as if I'm a voice from the sky, not involved in the tale at all. Here's what this record means to me personally. In 1999, horribly ill on tour in Scandinavia, I totally lost my voice; for a week I actually thought I'd destroyed it forever and I'd never be able to speak or sing again—it was really scary. Maybe some of you have heard this story before... now, in the last two days before I became completely mute, I was still able to sing, though I was really sick. We were on tour in Norway, and the first of those two days we played a fucking great show at the Blitz squat in Oslo. At least one of these kids was there; I think a few of them were. I was a wreck, but, sustained by the spirit of the crowd, we still reached that beautiful place a room full of screaming, sweating people can reach; I remember when we finished the set, I made a break for the gap at the edge of the stage, through which I hoped to escape to the toilets to crash out in utter exhaustion—but the huge, wild, woolly squatter-punk descendents of the Vikings beat me to it and blocked my way, pushing me back and shrieking "YOU PLAY MORE NOW!" as they brandished their vodka bottles. "We can't play more now," Matt informed the crowd—"our singer is going to die." Later that evening a somewhat-inebriated squatter punk without very good English approached and, solemnly, addressed me: "I am very sorry to hear that you are going to die." I was mute, of course, and couldn't correct the misunderstanding... but I'm getting off the subject. The next night we played a hardcore festival a few hours away, and the kids from Bodo were there again, having come over a thousand kilometers south for the two shows. That night I was on my last legs, barely able to move; I'm sure it was painful for everyone there to have to watch me struggling to make something beautiful when it was all I could do to stand up. If we made any real music that night, it was the inaudible music, the music we couldn't make but wanted to so desperately that it must have been wrenching for folks there, like the Bodonites, to see. We had to cancel our show in Trondheim, the next day, and that was the first of the days I woke up without any voice in my throat at all. Anyway, two years later, we returned to play in Oslo at the Blitz again. The Spectacle played, too, and they were great—and we were in good health, so we were able to return the favor; I recognized them from the earlier tour, and probably bragged about how healthy I was this time around. A few nights later, we were to play with them in Trondheim—but, of course, I had suddenly become so sick again that I couldn't even stand up. I slumped in the room behind the club, doing my best to talk with the Bodo kids; I imagine we talked about how important it is to make music despite the costs and challenges, that sort of thing. That night I couldn't do it—my friends took me back to a house and laid me on the floor, where I lay in fever-delirium—but the rest of our band played, and I heard later that the kids from Bodo had taken the microphone and passed it around the crowd, everyone singing and having a wonderful time. That made me feel good, to know that even when I can do nothing others are still out there making it happen; and getting this record was a wonderful reminder of that. To all of you who will keep punk and passion and music alive, even when I'm too fucked up or ill or defeated to participate, here's a salute. Maybe I'll never make most of that inaudible music audible, though I'm sworn to try; but I know if I don't, you will. Thank you. —b
Smart Patrol, Kirkeveien 5, N-8009 Bodo, Norway, www.smartpatrolrecords.com,
ihatethespectacle@yahoo.com

SICK OF SILENCE

"CRUSADER OF INDIVIDUALITY" CD:

When passionate young people are getting started making music of their own, they often start out trying out the words and songs of others on their own tongues, as a way to develop their own voices. This record definitely shows the influences of Refused's last record; the first song actually has that breakdown from Refused's "Protest Song '68" about how much more our music could be, impassioned manifesto and jazz buildup included. It has a catchy chorus, and I'm happy every time it comes around, so that's good! The second song kicks in with a part that could be a more rocking Tragedy, for my favorite part on the record; it has a break that sounds like something out of Botch, and then the clean channel parts with narration that could be the result of listening to various modern emo bands, or parts of the "Shape of Punk to Come" record. The third song has another breakdown with a string section, and the vocalist exhorting "let's set the world on fire, let's start tonight." The fourth song starts with some more rock'n'roll stuff that I like least out of everything here—when they get to the chorus, I wonder if they've been listening to Propagandhi, too. Anyway, derivative or not, I feel like these kids mean what they're saying, and that's the really important thing. If they take what they're doing seriously, and develop their own sound, their own style, their own voice (just

TRAGEDY (FIRST 12", 7", AND

"VENGEANCE" 12"): I'm at the end of my career as a music critic, writing the final review in the reunion issue of the 'zine I started as a teenager, so for once I can afford to be speechless before a record, to decline to attempt to describe it. In fact, I'm not going to attempt to describe any of these three records; all I can say is, since the last issue of this magazine, as fewer and fewer records came out that I could get really excited about, this band has maintained my faith that punk rock can still surprise and transform me as much as an adult as it did when I was a kid. Even when I couldn't listen to the records, these songs were definitely playing in my head in every ridiculous, miserable, or triumphant situation I've survived or celebrated over that time, keeping my spirits up and my resolve firm. Thank heaven for punk rock, that's all I can say. If you haven't heard these recordings, hunt them down—not to put anyone on a pedestal, but for me, in my world, this is the Amebix of our generation. -b

Try the address in the interviews section

TIMEBOMB "THE BEAT IS HERE FELLAS" CD: This is the CD on which Timebomb surprised all of us by totally changing their style. I think after this they changed it all again in some other direction, and quite possibly have since disappeared into the bottomless pit of history, or else perhaps they're out there right now putting the finishing touches on a record of Gregorian chants. Anyway, this record shows the influence of some Fugazi (the third song can be traced back, in places, to "Suggestion"), but it has a brighter, more joyous tone to it. The songs sound like they are crafted to some pop aesthetic from a parallel world, one unrecognizable to my ears at least but still strangely familiar. I usually can't stand anything upbeat or poppish, but for some reason I just think this is great. Unlike just about everything else in the world in a major key (with the obvious exception of Beethoven's Ninth), listening to this actually makes me happy, rather than annoyed. The photo collage in the layout, not to mention the '60's sentimentality and "live your dreams" politics, all point to Refused as the culprit in making these kids think they could get away with doing whatever they wanted, not trying to follow up one record with another in the same genre. That's great, though—I think this is the best thing they ever did, even at the peak of their straight edge metal phase. -b
Cane records, Paolo Gaiarsa, via s. Cristoforo 12, 36061 Basano del Grappa, Vicenza, Italy

repeating another band's departures from the genre will not set you free!)—well, that's the next step they have to take. For now, I'm thrilled they're singing about something, not just rocking out. -b
Freedumb Recordz, 101 Place Charles Lemoyne Longueuil, Quebec, J4K 2T3, Canada

SPEAK UP! "THIS DAY IS THE PERFECT DAY" CD:

Western imperialism rears its ugly head again, as the lyrics for this old-school Hungarian hardcore band are in poorly-translated English. I just wish to hell bands could feel safe singing in their native tongues. Though the points the band are making (condemnations of war, the class system, and animal exploitation) are right on, I don't really like this album. The music isn't catchy or powerful enough to make up for the old youth crew formula, and the singer doesn't have very good delivery. A lot of the energy is probably lost by the words being in English, and this just doesn't sound desperate enough for me. Altogether, not a bad release, but not outstanding enough to stay in my stereo. -xb
Bertalan Andras, Gazdag 13, Szombathely 9700, Hungary

STRIKE ANYWHERE

"UNDERGROUND EUROPE 2001

GENOA BENEFIT EP" 7": This is this band's 1999 demos, but the fact that they're released here as a benefit for arrestees at the Genoa protests makes this record worth mentioning even at this late date. I get the impression that Strike Anywhere, at least here, is the band some of us wished Avail would have been—they're out of the closet about their antiauthoritarian politics, keep a high energy level throughout and a youthful idealism in the foreground, their music is fast and gritty but they're not afraid of melody in the vocals or, for that matter, major key guitar parts—which still often have an undertone of sadness. Listening to this, I can sort of tell that Against Me was

just around the corner in punk history at that point. If you like Strike Anywhere, or, fuck it, Against Me, I'm sure you'd really enjoy this: as they sing in the last song, "1999, but it could be anywhere, any year"—that's almost too perfect a note to end this review on. What is this, Rolling Stone magazine? So instead, I'll conclude by complaining that they actually sing "Oi Oi Oi!" in that song, too, at one point—what is this, 1979? Anyway, pay no attention to the grumpy editor. -b
Scene Police, D.P.M., Humboldtstrasse 15, 53115 Bonn, Germany

SWALLOWING SHIT

"PROMO COPY—NOT FOR RESALE"

CD: Okay, so that's not the name, but I thought it was funny that our review copy was stamped with that. It's actually self-titled. This is an anthology of this Canadian band that was together from around 1995 to 1997 whose members have since moved on to play in bands that you've probably heard of. These songs are over before you possibly could get bored. They're fast, intense, to the point with non-stop energy and great recordings (with the exception of the last few songs). They sound like Crudos, then Drop Dead, then Slayer, then Umlaut and then Tear it Up. These guys are all over the place. But even with such short songs they manage to break into parts that sound totally original. This band is really tight as well. The lyrics are political, serious and straight to the point. On the contrary, the song titles themselves are fucking hilarious: "Lyrics That May Offend the Honkys," "Burn Winnipeg to the Fucking Ground," "Christian Metal=Nazi Reggae," "You're Not Old School, You're Just Old," "If Assholes Could Fly, This Place Would Be an Airport," etc. This is great! If you're a fan of fast, relentless hardcore definitely check this out. And check out the record label's name... -s
The G7 Welcoming Committee PO Box 27006, 360 Main Street Concourse Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3 Canada

UNCONFORM "THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS" CD:

This is some of the first punk music I've heard from Moscow, and I'm not disappointed. It's basically old school hardcore, but it's top notch, and there's plenty of variety and personality to set it apart: the two guitar parts complement each other well, the rhythms often switch up in interesting ways, the recording and playing are both excellent, and there are many flourishes and experiments that are above and beyond anything any old school band from this hemisphere has tried in a decade and a half: the intro features some

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beautiful cello playing that really sets it apart (think Cwili), another song includes sweet-voiced singing as a counterpoint to the usual gruff yelling and occasional youth crew vocals. Those unexpected moments are my favorite parts—the intro is so good, Unconform should ask the cellist to sign on for the long haul—but even in the moments when they're doing what many bands have done before, choruses, breakdowns, and all, they don't sound like anyone else; their transitions are still original, and their riffs are really good. The lyrics are sung and printed in Cyrillic, but the explanations also appear in English; they are about the individual struggle for dignity, as straight edge band lyrics often have been, but they come across as sincere. I'd recommend this highly to anyone who liked any of the various waves of self-consciously "old school" hardcore, and to anyone who enjoys punk bands who reinterpret old traditions to make them interesting again. -b
Unconform, P.O. Box 64, 109147, Moscow, Russia (unconform@mail.ru)

UPSILON ACRUX "LAST TRAIN

OUT" CD: I'm going back and forth between being annoyed and intrigued with this one. It's a quiet, spare sound, clean-channel guitars and bass and jazz drums in front exploring math-rock rhythms—presumably with a calculator in hand, as these time signatures are confusing the fuck out of me! At my favorite moments, the music is alien but softly beautiful, capturing the natural, almost non-musical beauty of distant rain; the second track is definitely an example of this. In those cases, their strange aesthetics work to throw the listener off in a way that forces her to open herself up to what's going on more. In the more annoying moments, the actual sounds the instruments are making are unpleasant and jarring enough (think—the alarm on a digital wristwatch) that, combined with the foreign time signatures, one can't help but wish it would just stop. As a musician, I'm fascinated by some of what they're doing, and would like to listen to this over and over until it makes sense to me intuitively; as a music lover, there are a couple tracks I'd like to hear often, and then some I'd like to skip from now on. Not bad, though, for something so out there compared to what I usually listen to. They get full credit for exploring, anyway; without bands out there doing that, it would be hard for other bands to keep composing new heart-rending, timeless anthems out of the same old materials. No vocals, so no lyrics; presumably no political pretensions, so no liner notes or essays. -b
www.hactivist.com

UWHARRIA "FURY IN THE FOOTHILLS" CD:

I think this band used to be a side-project for the people involved, but they recently converged in North Carolina and have been more active. I saw them play the other night and Rick, the

singer, proclaimed, "We play three kinds of music: thrash, metal and mosh." And he's right. This CD is nearly impossible to sit still to. It's a concept record for sure (or perhaps a concept band) with each song written about a different plant or animal that resides (or used to reside, prior to their extinction) in Uwharria, the bio-region that we live in here in NC. This recording is raw and fast with some of the most snotty, unintelligible vocals I've heard. I'm really glad that this band exists because I think that a great deal of thrash bands are apolitical bullshit. This band does a great job of letting people know what their songs are about when they play live. Their explanations are concise, accessible and even humorous and have gone over surprisingly well in Greensboro, of all places, where it is often difficult to speak about any sort of politics at a show because someone is always too drunk to let band members speak. Up the Uwharria punx—these guys are right on. -s
Slave, PO Box 10093, Greensboro, NC 27404

VANILLA "FANTASTIQUE" DOUBLE

12": Wow, this really is a double LP of melodic, moody, sad and pretty emo rock songs. This music proceeds from the tradition of punk that proceeded from Fugazi, rather than Minor Threat, so I'm not especially qualified to write about it. There's a pop aesthetic, but more in sweet, smooth texture than in the song structures: they're expansive, exploratory, patient. The tone and intensity doesn't vary too much, so you'd better like what they do a lot if the whole record is going to hold your attention. Don't get me wrong, though, they're good at it—it's just near the opposite end of the punk spectrum from Tragedy, in a terrain I don't venture into much. The lyrics paint a world of disintegrating relationships, alienating cityscapes, and uncaring gods. -b
Plastik Culture c/o Broussard Dorian, 17 rue Rifle-Rafle, 13100 Aix-en-Provence, France

WHEN WE DIE "DIGITAL ANGEL E.P." CD:

I'm not sure exactly what these cats are going for. This is screamy, repetitive hardcore. The songs never seem to go anywhere. There is an awkward tension throughout nearly the entire album. The vocals are choppy, and the whole thing is lacking any real energy or sense of direction. This just isn't driving enough for my tastes, musically or lyrically. -xb
www.13@prodigy.net

ANALENA/UNISON SPLIT 7": Analena is such an incredible band. Their vocalist, Ana (it's a coincidence—"analena" is Sanskrit for fire) has such emotive power, she's able to evoke a series of widely divergent emotions in just a few syllables.

CHARLIE DON'T SURF/UNISON/ INTENSITY "LIVE FROM THE DOM OMLADINE, BEOGRAD" THREE WAY

SPLIT CD: Check this out—fuck you and your bourgeois limited edition colored vinyl records by spoiled North American hipster "hardcore" bands, records like this one are what I love about punk rock! This is a live recording (and over 77 minutes!) of the first real d.i.y. punk show in Belgrade (May 5, 2001), following a five year vacuum caused by the war in Yugoslavia. The drama of that setting alone distinguishes this from all the uninspired records pouring out of uninspiring suburbs (not that you can't make great music in the suburbs, but you have to contest those suburbs to be able to do anything good there). The recording quality is great—and for my part, I often really prefer the unmediated, raw quality of a live recording to any studio fanciness. The first two bands are from Belgrade—Charlie Don't Surf starts out with a Charles Manson sample ("who put your voice up over my voice? who says your god's bigger than my god?", in part), chilling, which repeats as they begin playing a powerful, energetic, yet deeply sad introduction—the whole effect is really moving, it layers a number of different emotional responses over each other. Their music, once they get going, is fast and crazy, punk and fuck, really powerful yelling vocals cutting through—they're fucking great! Unison are a little less direct—they work more with dynamics, moving back and forth between restrained tension with melodic vocals and buildups and moments when everything busts out into intensity and screaming. They do manage to build to some great climaxes near the end, though. Intensity are in their natural environment here, playing the straightforward high energy hardcore that they do (did?) so well. This is as good as any of their studio stuff, in my opinion—all the intensity is here!—and has extra personality, thanks to their songs explanations and banter. They play twenty songs, including a Citizen's Arrest cover, compared to Charlie Don't Surf's fifteen and Unison's seven. The packaging, also very classy as a d.i.y. three-panel cardstock design, includes liner notes describing the context of this record and emphasizing the importance of keeping punk/hardcore "a permanent struggle against nationalism, racism, homophobia, sexism, and all forms of exploitation." Right on. Contact these folks and demand a copy of this, if you want some more nutrients in your punk rock diet. -b
Dreamstate, Milesevska 61, 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia (dreamstate99@yahoo.co.uk)

She can sing so sweetly, sounding almost childlike, then shriek with such hurt and anger and strength that it cuts right to my marrow, then sing sweetly again, this time lower, like one who has lived and suffered and is not guarded, exactly, on account of it, so much as deepened. And the band is behind her, ready to carry her everywhere with their music, just as she carries us. At the time I saw them play in Yugoslavia and Bosnia, I somehow had the idea that they were the Baltic Fugazi, but now I'm not sure exactly where that was coming from; they're tight and expressive, like Fugazi, but I think they play their fast parts a little faster, and generally use more emo musical

conventions ('emo' in the very best sense, I promise!)—lots of melodies intertwined, sudden dynamic changes. To sum up: this is great, such poetic, touching, expressive music, and I only wish for a full record of their music. Now, Unison: the first beat is distinctly a d-beat, but their aesthetic is far from the standard dis-band—the recording is a little thin and small, not dirty and overloaded, and some stuff sounds more youth crew than hardcore punk. They experiment with a huge reverb effect on the vocals in parts of the first song, a build-up with guitar noise in the background in the second one, and make their third song by far my favorite with some eastern European guitar lines and a related percussion part in the middle. All around, I can't say I'm as excited about them as about Analena, but that was a tall order. -b

LibberTea records, c/o Davor Bolant, Ivana Mazuranica 32, 10362 Kasina, Croatia

BOB BARKER YOUTH/AND I CAN'T

WAIT SPLIT 12: When I was in my mid-teens, a punk kid I knew was in a band called Bob Barker and the Abortions, so my life has pretty much come full circle. The latest tribute to Bob features those crazy, barking vocals that come across in a vehement, screaming, indecipherable monotone, fast punk with a recording that may be a little overloaded in the bass register, and that general atmosphere of excitement and recklessness that kids making this music for the first time can create. There's a section of static noise at the end that had me really concerned about the condition of the record player needle for a minute. And I Can't Wait, who have the audacity to put xs around their name at this late date (wow!) have a better recording that makes their impassioned, inexperienced punk rock come across a little more clearly. They play a little slower, but their vocalist is also screaming one anguished note over and over throughout most of the songs—and wait, those are breakdowns with youth crew vocals! And, oh shit, their side ends with a screaming call and response that gets me really excited: "Where's your heart/It's right here!" Fuck yes! B.B.Y. puts information about Food Not Bombs and vegetarianism on the back of their lyric sheet, while A.I.C.W. has a song called "Outnumbered 70 to 1" about "straightedge sisterhood! With my heart on my sleeve and an x on my hand I'm breaking into your boys' club." That's fucking awesome! I hope there is a small army of teenagers listening to this record in their parents' basements, their hearts pounding at the notion that their peers make records they like more than anything in the malls, slowly hatching commitments to d.i.y. that will last the rest of their lives. -b
Damn it, FUCK everybody who can't be bothered to provide a street address! There's just one email address in here, and if I know email, it won't do you any good: kingcobra.recording@hotmail.com... and oh, here's a webpage: www.andicantwait.com

CEMENTARIO SHOW/SIN DIOS "EL HOMBRE CONTRA SI MISMO" 7

Sin Dios has been around forever, working hard at spreading their old-fashioned Spanish anarchism with CDs that come packaged in books of history and political theory, and I'd seen them a couple times already in Poland (once in a squat, no less), but all the same this listening is the most excited I've been about their music yet. Fast punk rock with all the traditional drum beats, earnest, angry singing, occasional guitar leads; the lyrics are in Spanish, but "la etica no existe para el capital—la vida no es mercancia" is clear enough, at least to me—especially accompanied by a photo of an armored pig hitting an old man in the head with a baton. I saw Cementario Show in their native western Spain, after over four fucking months of straight touring, and I was still thrilled about their d-beats—I danced their whole performance, waving my fist in the air and guessing right every time a new transition was about to hit! A band with good d-beats is a thing of beauty, not to be taken lightly. And they don't sound like every other excellent d-beat band, either—the drummer does some original stuff on the snare drum, keeping a roll going throughout one whole part as a beat rather than a rhythm, and the hoarse vocalist has his own personality, as do the songs. Memorable songs—that's the dividing line between a good band and a great band. The riffs have something of a blues sensibility to them, under all the distortion, I think. Anyway, in my book, there's something to be said for any band that plays d-beats with those high guitar leads at the end of verses and doesn't sound like a total dis-clone. I was a little worried about some of the lyrics, until I recognized that was a G.G. Allin cover—now I'm more concerned about their musical taste. Regardless, I'd love to see them again just wave my fist in the air in time to the bass drum. -b

La Idea, Difusion Libertaria, Apdo. 18.251, 28080 Madrid —c, Santa Barbara, 9, Spain

INFECT/DISCARGA SPLIT CD: Infect is a high energy, fast, intense straightforward hardcore band quite possibly influenced by Infest and reminding me of Sweden's Intensity at their best. My comrade here in the kitchen I've occupied to compose reviews is thinking more along the lines of Melt Banana and Super Junky Monkey, but I think their blastbeats and catchy choruses are more directly connected to the U.S. forerunners of those bands. They're rocking here, full power, and their singer's clear voice cuts through over everything with great personality and fury. Yeah! And then Discarga comes in, even faster—yes! faster!—with over-the-top blastbeats, yelling vocals, and plenty of energy of their own. I wish they'd offered more originals, though—after that great first song they offer a good Circle Jerks cover, a painful-to-listen-to Kiss cover, a good Nations on Fire cover, and a half-decent Motorhead medley (sorry,

Northern Ireland's Bleeding Rectum did it better) before finally playing one more song of their own and ending with a big drum finale. Both bands print their lyrics only in the original Portuguese—but from what I know of them, they're all right on people, so don't worry about that. -b

78 Life records, Caixa Postal 2505, cep 09190, Sto Andre, SP, Brazil

MAKHNOVSHCHINA & GUARDIA

NEGRA DEMO CD: This is two Boston bands sharing a CDR with a color-copied cover/insert for each band. Both covers are impressive for a demo, especially the Guardia Negra one, and both bands have pretty rough sound quality. Makhnovshchina (that's a mouthful!) play mostly crusty hardcore sometimes leaning towards street punk and sometimes towards metal, strangely enough. There are a lot of d-beats, blast beats and fast rock beats. Their lyrics are straightforward and deal with topics ranging from destroying the World Bank to killing cops to stopping gentrification. I like this. I'd love to see this band live and I look forward to hearing a better recording from them in the future. Guardia Negra are a bit sloppier musically but they sing in Spanish, which is exciting. They play simple four-chord street punk rock with melodic vocals that sometimes almost come to a scream... but not quite. I wish this band had a bit more energy. The songs sound sort of laid back and I don't think that is intentional. The singer could help improve this if he sang a bit harder and sounded like he was giving it his all. There are English translations of the songs and they seem to generally be well-researched words about class struggle and revolution. I'm not digging this one too much, but it is sure nice to hear North American bands singing in Spanish. -s

Barricada PO Box 73 Boston, MA 02133

OVERMARS/DONEFOR "IN THE ARMS OF OCTOPUS" SPLIT CD

This is two French bands splitting a CD. One song is in French and the rest are in English with all the song explanations in French. Overmars starts off the CD with a long minor key clean guitar intro that I suspect is intended to slowly build tension before the heavy part of the song kicks in—but doesn't quite succeed, as it gets pretty boring about half way through. The song finally comes in as heavy sludge similar to some of the stuff that Face Down in Shit or Neurosis play. There's some effects and impressive guitar work now and then, but for the most part, the ten minutes and twenty-six seconds that comprise this first song are pretty uneventful. The second song, however, comes in really rocking. It starts with a down-tuned, shitty sounding bass guitar and then the rest of the band comes in with upbeat drums and high droning guitar notes. This song is much better—they should have put it first. Unfortunately, much like the first song, the parts go on for much

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too long without any exciting changes and I'm bored again. Same with the third song though they do suddenly break into a quiet part in the middle of the chaos. I'm only into six, eight or ten minute songs if they're interesting enough to captivate my attention for that long. Donefor is a whole lot more interesting with their first song ranging from parts that sound like Converge to Sonic Youth to Earth Crisis. The band continues to encompass a great deal of variety throughout their other three songs with different tempos and guitar tones and an indication that they are working from many different influences. All of the parts flow together really smoothly too. This is good song composition although I'd have to say there are a few too many "mosh" parts for my liking. -s

*Overmars 21 Grande Rue La Guillotiere
69007 Lyon, France; Donefor 27 Rue Des
Combes 69250 Curtis Au Mont D'or, France*

UNSANE CRISIS/EKKAIA SPLIT

CD: As I listened to the first few songs from Unsane Crisis I thought I was in for seventeen songs of non-stop blast beat that was going to be difficult for me to get through since songs like that usually make me want to rip my hair out and poke out my eyes. But I was in for a surprise as I got a little further into the CD. They do a good variety of stuff that keeps it interesting. Don't get me wrong—the majority of this is blast beat chaos, but now and again they break into good d-beat parts, fast street punk sounding stuff, powerful "floor-punching" parts and even some slower heavy parts that sound like Korn, but surprisingly not in a bad way—perhaps it only sounds like that cuz they're tuned so low. The vocals are ear piercing shrieks for the most part but there's some cookie monster grunts and growls here and there. If you like fast thrash metal sounding stuff and can deal with a bad recording that really buries the guitars than this might be for you. Oh, the lyrics are great—English sung by a Spanish band: "Just another more song. Why would have any sense. I only want to fun". Ekkaia, who have four songs on here, sing in Spanish and fall somewhere in between screamo, metal and thrash. This band has a lot of skill and a decent recording, but even though they are doing some really interesting stuff, it's not really moving me. They sort of remind me of Converge at times—really good technically, but I can't find much emotion. Maybe I take some of that back. It may be that I'm just worn out by the first band's seventeen songs. I think I'd enjoy seeing both of these bands live, but this CD is just mediocre. -s

*Difusion Liberataria La Idea Apdo 18251,
28080 Madrid, Spain*

VUUR/SEEIN' RED "ANOTHER FINE PUNK PRODUCT" SPLIT 7: Vuur is rocking, taking everything that was good about Systral's "Fever" record and going with it: grainy bass, chord progressions that

occasionally sound like they were composed by Martians, blastbeats to keep the listener awake, over-the-top screaming vocals backed by low-bass-rumbling vocals, great stuff. Their first song is about working on improving yourself rather than criticizing others who stick their necks out—I wish that attitude was more prevalent in certain activist corners of the punk world. This is truly fist-pounding, head-banging, glass-smashing stuff, top notch. And, speaking of Systral, whose indecision and uncertainty was so touching on that record (though it later panned out into apolitical apathy), the lyrics to their last song are similarly ambiguous and conflicted: "RAGE!! I am gonna set your world on fire! I don't want to set your world on fire. Rage... rage!!! I apologize for my rage!" Seein' Red are fucking maniacs to have been hammering out hyper-energetic, short-attention-span punk rock songs for the last two decades and still be at it in top form, but here they are doing exactly that. Four songs, covering homophobia, conformity, ignorance of world suffering, and capitalism—ending with a wild-eyed call not only to smash the state and capitalism, but also to kill the oppressor. Punk rock indeed. -b
*Day One, Nico, Olenseweg 151, 2260
Westerlo, Belgium*

"VARNA HARDCORE POINT OF VIEW" COMPILATION CD

CD: This is a compilation of eight bands from Varna, Bulgaria: Never Again, Crowfish, Indignity, Outrage, Not Broken in Spirit, BFH, No Values and Another Day. I was hoping that because this is from half way across the world, I would be exposed to something new and different when I put this in my stereo. But apparently American imperialism has infected every corner of the planet—nearly all of these bands sound like bad NY hardcore from one year or another and when they stray from that, it sounds like Pantera or Korn. Each band has a slightly different sound, I guess, but share a common ground of being all boys and having purposefully-macho vocals. I don't like any of this—sorry guys. -s
unitedandstrong@gbg.bg

print reviews

949 MARKET: This is fucking great, a stellar example of the heroic endeavors and creative documentations that come out of our community. In spring of 2001, a vast building in downtown San Francisco was squatted; it hosted a punk show attended by 600 people, enormous servings of free food, and the dreams and ambitions of a wide circle of people from all walks of life who cleaned and rewired it, and decorated it floor to ceiling with graffiti murals. This is their story, told through various accounts and interviews and photographs, from the moment the space was discovered to the eviction and its aftermath. This account does exactly what it should do—it captures those events in a way that makes the reader feel like similar adventures might be possible in other contexts, rather than glorifying some past achievement. I'd recommend this highly to anyone interested in squatting or messing with the fabric of reality in general in this repressive country. -b
*Zara, 3288 21st St., P.M.B. #79, San
Francisco, CA 94110*

A KIND OF EPIC: Everyone sit up and take note, though I can't promise it will do you any good! This little 'zine, probably produced in a print run of only a few dozen, is one of the finest collections of poetry I've read in some time. I'm very rarely excited about poetry—when I find a great poem, or even a great line, I dwell or soar on it for weeks, but that's extremely rare. Rita Mae Brown's "The Hand that Cradles the Rock" is my latest favorite discovery in the world of poetry, and it was 1997 when I came across it. This 'zine is up there with that book, for me—all the more impressive, since the author is from mainland Europe. His English is effortless like only a true poet's can be, though, shot through with those occasional moments of revelation when the language and the world you thought you'd known all your life suddenly, simultaneously open up new horizons before you. Yes! But good luck getting your hands on this. Some of my favorite poems in here are not actually part of the 'zine—they're written on scraps of paper, tucked into it (when I was in Europe, I was lucky enough to bump into the author and get him to give me copies of some unpublished ones)—so your best bet is just to try to track this guy (Maarten Das is his name) down and get him to share something with you. He's since released another 'zine of poetry, which I don't like as much (he works more with straightforward rhymes in it, which gives a singsong quality to the work), but I'll print the email address from that one, since the contact on this 'zine doesn't work anymore. -b
whydaredevilspray@hotmail.com

COMMUNICATING VESSELS VOLUME 1, #7 AND WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE VOLUME 3, #5: These 'zines are two of a kind: both feature consistently intelligent anarchist theory from an insurrectionist/ultraist perspective, balance historical

and even statistical precision with a taste for surrealist fantasy, are illustrated with borrowed woodcuts and cartoons that xerox nicely, and appear at remarkably regular intervals. C.V. is more prone to artiness, with significant parts given over to poetry and somewhat overwrought narratives one might expect to see from the Chicago Surrealist Group; it also focuses more on a politics of daily life resistance, as opposed to the hyper-theoretical critiques, abstract glorifications of revolt, and dry news blurbs of W.D. The highlights of this issue of C.V. are two reprints—an excellent analysis of the differences between “antiwar” movies that subtly glorify war and works which succeed in undermining its grip on the psyche, and an anti-work manifesto translated from German—and a contribution from a food service worker who interprets his (?) experiences engaging in on-the-job resistance in terms from class struggle theory. If the similarities in format and subject matter were not enough, this issue of Willful Disobedience quotes the same British ‘zine in the same discussion of how anti-war agitation cannot convincingly be pro-peace, either. Of the two, W.D. has the deeper analyses, and this issue is one of the better ones—the arguments about anarchism being about means as well as ends, the role of festival as pressure valve in oppressive society, and the centrality of desire in anarchist economics are convincing, and might even usefully inform one’s practice. Still, I have to admit, I want to like both these ‘zines more than I succeed in liking them—if only the poetry in C.V. could actually move me, I would be deeply faithful to it, but it has yet to; and W.D., on the other hand, is demoralizing in that it tends to include a lot of abstract ranting about stuff I deeply believe myself (immediate struggle against alienation and oppression in all their forms, etc. etc.) that still fails to leave me with any particularly new ideas of how to realize those abstractions, coupled with news reports about real life exciting things happening very far away—which offer no practical information on how I could be involved. Mere thinking about revolt won’t help us—we have to think and act, and my favorite papers are the ones that offer equal proportions of philosophical and practical armaments. All the same, between these two I’d recommend Willful Disobedience, especially, as a stellar example in the tradition of verbosely theoretical revolutionary anarchism. Just make sure you leave the armchair after reading. -b
Communicating Vessels: Mutual Aid Portland, P.O. Box 7328, Portland, ME 04112
Willful Disobedience: Venomous Butterfly Publications, P.O. Box 31098, Los Angeles, CA 90031

CREATIV@ [#4?]: El ateneo ha publicado una colección de pequeños ensayos políticos en un ‘zine de 32 páginas. Queda énfasis en la cuestión de los presos en España, y también hay

escritos sobre el espacio libre imaginativo, físico, y psicológico que debemos ofrecerles a nuestros hijos para ayudarlos a crecer mejor; algunos contra los efectos aniquilantes y estandarizantes de la escuela y del trabajo; una biografía de Louise Michel, educadora libertaria francesa del Siglo XIV, y una descripción corta de la utopía protoanarquista Sinapia. No profundizan mucho en estos temas, pero la mayoría tienen una energía sincera e idealista. Aparece también una lista de las publicaciones que tiene el ateneo en su biblioteca. -@
Ateneo Libertario Eliseo Reclús, Apdo. 586, 11480 Jerez Fra., Cádiz, España

DISORDERLY CONDUCT #6 AND GREEN ANARCHY #12: Like Disorderly Conduct and Communicating Vessels, this ‘zine and paper are so closely tied to one another in terms of content, tone, and even personnel that it makes the most sense to review them together. Both of these, taken together, constitute the best-known voices of anarcho-primitivism in North America, or at least the really confrontational strains of it (I’m not counting Derrick Jensen here, nor Daniel Quinn, for good or for ill). Do I like them? I go back and forth—when the contents just seem too outlandish to do anyone any practical good in the actual struggles for freedom and authentic living that are going on, or, worse, when too much space is given over to vitriolic attacks on other radicals, I can get really fed up (especially with Green Anarchy, which seems to be edited by people with scant social skills in the important field of conflict resolution!); on the other hand, on good days, I enjoy the fact that there is a wing of the anarchist community at least as far out as I am, and take interest in their perspectives for the sake of diversity at least (this is more the case for Disorderly Conflict). So what are the differences between the two? The obvious distinction is depth: Green Anarchy is a tabloid, with coverage of environmental direct action, radical struggles from around the world (seen through a primitivist lens, of course), infighting between various anarcho-splinter groups, and intermittent essays (that, when they don’t just boil down to another repetition of the obvious “Destroy Civilization, Already!” can be interesting: the fall of Rome, how to prepare and eat roadkill!); Disorderly Conduct, on the other hand, has the space to add some subtleties and diversity. In addition to direct action news and exhortations, this issue includes, to its credit, a story by Italo Calvino, an account of a trip through the anarchist squat circuit in southern Europe, a piece on the Aborigine concept of Dreamtime, and even my now all-time favorite poem on the subject of spelling and grammar elitism (no, it wasn’t a competitive running, but anyway): “its or it’s”: “it’s or its, I really don’t care—it’s its ‘it’s’ and ‘its’, it’s its shit, not mine.” Of the two, then, I’d recommend

BEATING HEARTS OF THE WORLD

UNITE: This is such a beautiful project, the kind that takes a deep generosity to undertake, since it’s easy to feel like this world just doesn’t deserve anything beautiful like this, and that it won’t shelter anything like this that is brought into it. This is a 130 page handcrafted book, one of quite a few they must have put together, hand-binding them, hand-gluing in photographs of haunting landscapes, hand-stamping the covers, hand-writing in words. Rather than selling them, they offer them in trade for other gifts or works of art or imagination from others, a grand gesture in itself. And the content is absolutely top-notch—it’s essentially everything I would want to read in the d.i.y. press, gathered together. There’s fiction, personal narratives, essays and manifestos, art and poetry, even a little news, all covering the spaces where anarchist and activist politics, sex and love and sexual/ amorous liberation, and passionate living in general intersect and intertwine. Some of it is plagiarized, some reprinted, much of it original, all of it high quality and yet very personal, even intimate, as if everything here was done by someone you knew, with you in mind. By the time you’re reading this, it may well be a couple years since they put these together, but you should write them all the same, sending something beautiful you’ve dared to make yourself, so this quixotic gift won’t be entirely wasted on this world after all. -b

Beating Hearts Press, P.O. Box 444, Wollongong, NSW 2520 Australia

Disorderly Conduct more, in view of it offering more variety (and balancing out the vindictiveness with humor and even verse), though it might be easier for the indigent reader to get her hands on Green Anarchy free. -b
both available from P.O. Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440

ILLEGAL #2: Este ‘zine español es bien escrito e interesante. [También está un poco viejo (del enero de 2002)—pero eso es por la culpa del programa de publicación de Inside Front, no por otra cosa.] Se trata de la escena punk con un enfoque en la política (específicamente en el anarquismo y movimientos asociados con ello). Hay columnas sobre el rol de la música en cuanto a la difusión de las ideas; sobre cómo podamos vivir unas vidas DIY, no sólo comar discos y leer ‘zines DIY; sobre la prostitución, los okupas en Holanda y en España (los dos un poco pesimistas), y el vegetarianismo. “EL PUNK ES ODIOS” nos anima a reclamar el punk por afirmar nuestro asco a la gente, pero su tema más grande es cómo hacer que el punk como movimiento pueda escaparse de su asimilación enervante a la corriente principal cultural. Hay entrevistas con Submission Hold (muy larga e interesante: tratan temas como la crianza de niños, el

reviews

separatismo en Quebec, Canadá, las drogas, y los ordenadores), Tragedy, un hombre de la escena punk de Groningen, Holanda, Ruidoactivo (de un pueblo pequeño español), y, por dios, otro con Catharsis. Las preguntas por lo general son originales y las respuestas no aburren. Hay dos artículos sobre ateneos colectivos, uno de ellos en Brasil. Las reseñas tienen personalidad propia. @ Don't Belong, Apdo. 8035, 33200 Gijón, España

PROFANE

EXISTENCE #40:

I've always been perplexed when little magazines like Inside Front reviewed much more widely-circulated ones like Profane Existence—what good could that possibly do? But in this case, it offers me a chance to think through some things I've been preoccupied with anyway—so damn the torpedoes, I'm gonna do it, and hopefully you'll get something out of it too. Now, as a younger punk rocker, I was all about innovation—everything had to be new, an unheard-of idea, a challenge to everything taken for granted, a break with the past even if that past had just been a break with the past before it. Getting a little older, though, I discovered within myself a profound love for longstanding punk conventions—d-beats, patches, dreadlocks, badly xeroxed 'zines and basement shows, sullen teenagers, the works. Every time I saw, heard, met, or went to one of these, it felt like less of a ritual and more of an affirmation of persistence: twenty-some years into this counterculture, literally tens of thousands of sell-outs, age-outs, arrests, prison terms, and catastrophes later, and we're still at it—the punk community is still somehow spawning new generations of anarchists, activists, squatters, radical

feminists, local communities, and even, occasionally, good bands! So at this point, sometimes I'm more thrilled just to see a new issue of an old, old (I mean old in punk years) paper like Slug and Lettuce than I am to see a brand new band demonstrate some strange new hybrid of punk and cutting-

enough to keep doing exactly the same stuff, printing interviews with young anarchist bands and ranting simply against the government and religion over and over year in and year out? I wonder if there are any elements missing in the anarcho-punk scene (more tactical information, new insights

into the advantages of a marginal lifestyle, new connections to others communities, new anticapitalist strategies to try) that Profane Existence and others like them could come up with and spread, elements which could really make punk twice as dangerous as it already is, just as this magazine succeeded in doing in the '90's. Anyway—in this issue, you'll find middle-finger anti-government/war political rants, a little activist news (including an exchange about squat legalization reprinted from the fucking internet—are we living in the last days of print culture, or what?), angry demands that punx “live up to their patches”

based on the age-old notion that punk rock isn't as right on as it once was, Felix von Havoc's history of Crust punk in the U.K. (which is fascinating for us old folks, and probably also for young folks who were in diapers at the time—but it's troubling to me, too, since for our scene to be powerful and healthy we have to focus primarily on the present, not on the old days), and, on the back cover, even a good old-fashioned attack on Christianity. The most troubling parts are the interviews, which are so superficial as to read like interviews from Maximum Rock'n'Roll, and the reviews, which are similarly superficial for the most part (and, though I'm sure reviewer Nate didn't mean for this to come off as badly as it does, I really cringed when he wrote “most bands can't pull off the female vocals” in the Tem Eyos Ki review). If my fears that this is all too rooted in the past were not great enough already, the magazine cover is taken from one of the first Metallica records. Here's my dilemma: just existing, even without any evolution in content, approach, or quality, is an achievement for Profane Existence and everyone associated with it—so maybe it's OK that their contents don't challenge me today the way they did a decade ago, maybe they challenge some modern-day teenager instead. But, on the other hand, maybe today's average teenager needs to be challenged in some other way, too, since the world is evolving—and I really hope anarcho-punk will be able to remain a challenging, empowering force for the next generation, somehow... so how could P.E. evolve to address the needs of these new kids, assuming they are different? It certainly can't help that many of us older

HALF WILD: I lack the poetry to extol this 'zine as it deserves to be extolled. Suffice to say, it is an eloquent, intensely personal testimony, written very much from inside the world of emotionally conflicted, mentally unstable, nature-loving social dropouts—and yet possessing the power to communicate far outside that context. It is the equal, and yet the opposite, of a 'zine like Burn Collector: where Burn Collector is astute but cynical, this author achieves wisdom through her insistent, impractical artlessness, flaunting her raw idealism and the unhealed wounds it occasions. It is as moving as, and yet utterly different from, any literature in the vein of Harbinger: it is not a manifesto, nor an exhortation—it has far more in common with the personal 'zines of old—but yet communicates and inspires with that power, a power deriving here from the intimacy and openness of the author. I have to say—I've gotten a lot of really important insights out of reading and rereading this, as I have out of few 'zines in a long time, and I know others who have too; at her best moments, the author looks at the world through a sort of permaculture perspective, piecing together different ecosystems and the ways they function (or, tragically, break down). In case all this praise still leaves it unclear what this is actually “about,” let me offer some selections from the contents: “crazy,” “glory tramps,” “nonmonogamy,” “disaster,” “creatures out of their element.” Got it?

-b

Kika Kat at the Grubumkin House, 726 Frederick, Olympia, WA 98501

edge jungle techno. That would make you think I'd be overjoyed to see this new issue of the mainstay publication of the U.S. anarcho-punk community, and I am, but... I've got to air some misgivings, too. The problem for me is that P.E. has changed so little over the years that I'm afraid it can't possibly be as useful to the new generations

of punks as it was almost fifteen years ago. I mean, “making punk a threat some more” is critical, but the original punk scene they formed to radicalize no longer exists—their readership and “target audience” is now made up of kids raised on the bands that were reading this magazine in the early '90's,

while kids in other parts of the punk scene seem to languish on without any connection to radical possibilities. It would be ridiculous for me to think these folks would move on to radicalizing the emo scene or the metalcore scene, so I guess what I'm saying is that they (and all of us anarcho-punks) need to focus on how to keep developing our scene, and our role in it. Is it

JACK FROST'S TOP TEN SOURCES OF MOTIVATION WHILST LAYING OUT THIS ZINE:

1. Fear of Editor's swift reprisal³
2. Envy - *Any recording I can get my mits on*
3. Memento Mori: *s/t*
4. Lightning Bolt: *Wonderful Rainbow*
5. Mirah - *Advisory Committee*
6. Spring landscape in bloom right outside the library window (*damnit!*)
7. Pizza dumpster awaiting me after every night's work
8. Panda Cam: <http://www.sandiegozoo.org/special/pandas/pandacam/>
9. Explosions in the Sky - *Peel Sessions*
10. Asschapel - *Total Worship (don't let the band name fool you—they're fucking amazing!)*

³ Just kidding!

punks are now twice the age of the kids getting involved now, when it comes to the question of what we should be doing to be useful. Maybe it's Profane Existence's job just to hold down the fort doing what they've always done well, and Inside Front's job to try out the complementary stuff—but Inside Front doesn't exist anymore, so who's ready to take that on? -b

Profane Existence, P.O. Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408

SOFAKARTOFFEL #4: This 'zine reminds me a lot of Liev's *Ugly Duckling* 'zine, one of my favorites from Belgium: like that 'zine, Sofakartoffel (that's literal German for "couch potato," but the 'zine is largely in English, with little flourishes of Spanish) is mostly written in handwriting, with all the intimacy that can create between the writer and reader, and ranges from personal confessions and reflections to explicit considerations of such issues as "pro-life" bullshit (represented here by a debate between editor Sandra and some Italian holdover from the ghost of hardline past) and whether it is anti-Semitic to criticize Israel for their genocidal oppression of Palestinians. The hardcore scene is present throughout, not so much as a subject of coverage as a backdrop. There's a massive account of her travels last summer, including a trip through Argentina that I believe is the counterpart of Cyril's Argentinean scene report in this issue. The reader will probably come away from *Sofakartoffel* with an invigorating dose of optimism and idealism, and a finer sensitivity to the precious things in life. -b
Sandra c/o A. Fleischer, Bachbohlweg 47, 78467 Konstanz, Germany

WASTELAND AND PROLEFUTTER: These are two excellently produced graphic works by the same artist. *Wasteland* is a dystopian story in pictures (think Lynd Ward, only grittier, bleaker, more terrifying), about an individual lost in a literally heart-rending world; there is some text in Deutsch, but it's not central to understanding or appreciating the work. The line drawings are simultaneously raw and precise, and convey alienation and disconnection without distancing the viewer from the sadness they portray. *Prolefutter* is more provocative, even political, art/manifesto than narrative; the graphics are largely collage-based (think early CRASS layouts, plus twenty years of

INTERNATIONALE PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC: "THE

AMSTERDAM EPISODE": This is one of those near-unintelligible yet precious gifts to an unresponsive world that can come out of moments when individuals trust their own whims and subjective responses enough to act on them instead of limiting themselves to established forms. In this case, that approach has produced a subjective map of two (?) observers' wanderings through the foreign city of Amsterdam: it's a patchwork of witty intellectual commentary, scrawled personal accounts and notations, and jarring collages assembled from on-the-spot photo documentation, sketches, and xeroxes of tickets/schedules/other souvenir-artifacts. It reads like a letter from your most deranged and creative friend's winter hitchhiking trip (which, in my case, it actually is—not that this colors my opinion!). The maps of Amsterdam would not help even the most accomplished C.I.A. agents retrace the steps of our erstwhile authors, let alone enable a newcomer to Amsterdam to navigate its streets, but that's not the point here; if anything, they might encourage other travelers to feel like their own private journeys are as worth mapping as any "objective" space is. The commentaries, covering anti-expert iconoclasm ("of course they write long and fancy books, but if you were stuck in a small cubicle for forty years, you would write books as well!"), squatter ethnography ("living at a place without paying rent?! That's like an object with mass not being affected by gravity"), and tourist pathology ("tourists need help. 'Help' would be kind—tourists need electro-shock treatment") and its cure ("once you are predictable, you can be stopped—but unleashed upon the world, operating by sheer fancy, taking note of the most mundane scenes, nothing will be safe... we don't need the camera, the camera needs us"), are hilarious and insightful, and the already-irregular margins of my copy are now filled with my own additional notations, from inspirations that hit me in the course of reading ("For an Imaginarian Antinational!" "...on the side of the angels, i.e., against all of us" "...a lost glove senses the moment of its former master's death..."). Who knows if these authors can be tracked down to mail out copies of this to folks like you, but if you write us at the Greensboro or Atlanta CrimethInc. addresses, we have a few copies, and I'd be willing to send you one myself. It's worth the read for nonsense like this alone; "...the bargain basement is also the torture chamber, the concentration camp, the charnel house with Christmas tree decorations..." -b

email addresses to try: blackandgreen@ziplip.com, kaviat@graffiti.net, everyangelisterrible@doityourself.com

development), with really intricate work throughout. Rape, patriarchy, capitalism are portrayed with the kind of graphic genius and mental acuity that lays everything frighteningly bare. There is more text—English for the bold statements, Deutsch for the fine print—but again, an English speaker would still get a lot out of this. Not every picture is worth a thousand words, but these two compositions are worth their weight in Cometbus 'zines and George Orwell books. If you take d.i.y. visual arts seriously, try to track these down, or other work by this artist. -b

Flatline-Imperium c/o M99, Manteuffelstr. 99, 10997 Berlin, Germany

TOOLBOX OF WEAPONS FOR LIBERATION/ CATALOG OF MERCHANDISE FOR CONSUMPTION (it's up to you!)

CrimethInc. Far East is, by far, the most efficient distributor of CrimethInc. materials. Those motherfuckers are horribly overworked, though, so only send them simple, paid orders. Send generic requests for free stuff, special requests, and personal letters to the Urban Pirates address instead. The Urban Pirates also mail out vast quantities of free literature—zines, posters, etc.—whenever they have the money to afford the postage. For that matter, they're the ones who could get you shirts or patches (various anarchist, Catharsis, Zegota, Blacken the Skies, etc. designs). Send impersonal orders for CDs and copies of *Inside Front* to Stickfigure, along with all inquiries about buying those items wholesale. Stickfigure is the best place for retailers and distributors to order items from the record label division of CrimethInc.

Payment to CrimethInc. Far East can be made in cash or money order made out to CrimethInc., or order online with credit card (yes, that's disgusting, but let's not be coy: this is the getting-our-hands dirty-in-commerce part, that hopefully somehow finances and enables the creating-community-and-killing-heads-of-state part). Payment to the Urban Pirates should be in the form of well-concealed cash or blank checks. Payment to Stickfigure can be made in cash, check or money order made out to Stickfigure, or you can order online or over the phone with credit card; customers that order only one record have to pay an additional \$.50 for shipping, customers that order one record or CD and want it sent by priority mail need to pay an additional \$3, and all Georgia orders add 7% sales tax—isn't that fucked!

PAPER:

Inside Front postscript issue: This is what you're holding, silly.
1 copy/\$5 postpaid in the USA (\$7 world), 5+/\$3.50 each postpaid in the USA (\$5 world)

Inside Front #13: The supposed final issue of the magazine you're reading! This issue focuses on how to create communities that both foster freedom in the lives of those involved and fight for positive change on a larger scale; it also includes extensive reports from many of the activist demonstrations and similar undertakings of 1999-2001, discussions on alternatives to monogamous relationships and gender roles, and the usual pages and pages of fine-print columns, how-to guides, reviews, etc. 164 pages, and comes with a cd compilation featuring an international cast of punk/hardcore bands: Milemarker, Newborn, Endstand, Point of No Return, Newspeak, Constrito, Shank, Abuso Sonoro, Ruination, Cwill, many more.
1 copy/\$5, 5+/\$3.50 each

Inside Front #12: Features a lengthy retrospective/interview with Refused, an interview discussing hardcore imperialism and the third world with Brazilian band Point of No Return, a new take on the old tradition of scene reports (including the Appalachian Trail and Lewisburg, North Carolina), an analysis of Reclaim the Streets protests, and a whole lot more. 136 pages, and including the already-classic eleven song 6" by Finland's most notorious roadsters, Umlaut.
1 copy/\$3, 5+/\$1.50 each

Stone Hotel: This book of poetry is a no frills ride through one man's experience in the United States prison system, and all of the lunacy, horror, and meditation that entails.
1 copy/\$10, 2/\$17, 3/\$22, 4/\$26, 5-9/\$6 each, 10 or more/\$5 each (this is a fund-raiser for the upcoming *Fighting For Our Lives* reprint)

Days of War, Nights of Love: Crimethink "for beginners"—your ticket to a world free of charge.
1 copy/\$8, 2/\$14, 3/\$19, 4/\$23, 5-9/\$5 each, 10 or more/\$4.50 each

Evasion: The controversial account of one boy who left his destined place in society behind to steal, scam, and hitchhike to personal freedom.
1 copy/\$6, 2/\$11, 3/\$15, 4/\$23, 5-9/\$4 each, 10 or more/\$3.50 each

Fighting For Our Lives: This free paper discusses, in simple language, what is anarchist in everyday life, and how those spheres of cooperation can be expanded. It addresses common questions that often deter people from exploring anarchist ideas and approaches, and endeavors to help introduce new terms and possibilities into the public consciousness.
Individual copies free to all. Bulk orders will be possible again one day, hopefully by the time you see this—we have to raise the money to reprint them.

Hunter/Gatherer—CrimethInc. Journal of Folklore and Folkwar, #1: A manifesto of confusion to make war on nonsense! A journal celebrating the decentralized, radically participatory do-it-yourself underground, mass-produced and distributed by a vanguard elite? A broadside emphasizing your capabilities by glorifying the adventures and achievements of a privileged few? A fable chronicling traditions of revolt, a pioneer expedition into the past, a retelling of time to rescue the future? History or story, legend or legerdemain, anthropology or propaganda?
Individual copies free to all.

[note: the Urban Pirates distribute many of the various follow-up issues of *Hunter/Gatherer*, most recently including the audio *Hunter/Gatherer* on CDR, which can be obtained from them for \$2 and 2 postage stamps.]

D.I.Y. Guide #2: This rugged little urban pirate handbook includes practical information on participating in demonstrations, direct action, shoplifting, software piracy, d.i.y. spelling and grammar, traveling on trains, backpacking, urban camping and evasion, herbal gynecology, d.i.y. abortion, sewing, d.i.y. oil change, making your own quarter pipe for skating, forearm guards, pressing records, CD's, and zines, book publishing, beating the postal system, food not bombs, plaster casting, black and white photography, and safety pin tattoos.
Individual copies free to all, bundle of 40/\$15 donation

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The Walls Are Alive: A how-to graffiti guide, including wheatpasting.

Individual copies are free. 50 copies/\$8, 100 copies/\$15

Off the Map: Personal travel 'zine by two young women dead set upon making their lives what they dream of and vice versa. 94 delightful pages across Europe squatting, hitching, and creating new worlds in which to frolic. Amazingly well-written and much more than just another mindless recounting of traveling stories. Highly recommended.

Free to all, donations appreciated

Dropping Out: Rather than a comprehensive foray into the subject of dropping out, this zine aims to provide some practical tips along with some personal writing on the experience of dropping out of high school. Strongly recommended for those in the heart of high school hell, and them alone.

Free to all, donations appreciated

ROCK:

Blacken the Skies CD: Punks/activists push the anarcho-punk musical tradition to a new level of creativity, intensity, and emotional expression. Imagine Zegota as a d-beat band like Diallo or From Ashes Rise: the heart and soul, the long improvisations, but with fist-waving, dreadlock-swinging crust parts! Ten soulful, dark, wide-ranging songs in 50 minutes.
1 copy/\$9, 5+/\$5.50 each

Countdown to Putsch "double CD: Pioneering, political hardcore drawing on the radical traditions of free jazz improvisation, spoken word performance, and experimental noise—absolutely unique, and breaking important new ground to keep the genre vital.

1 copy/\$10, 5+/\$6 each

Catharsis "Arsonist's Prayer"/Newborn "Ready to Leave, Ready to Live" CD/LP: The last recording from Catharsis (one ten-minute song) and Newborn (three songs on the CD—the LP has four: hectic, intricate, soulful compositions from this incredible Hungarian band), packaged with the usual creative (i.e. ripped off) CrimethInc. finesse.

CD-1 copy/\$8, 5+/\$5 each; LP-1 copy/\$10, 5+/\$6 each

Catharsis "Passion" CD: To sow seeds in barren fields where there is no more fertile ground. To bear the fragile worlds within through the ruined one that surrounds. To lift us up, to bring empires down.

1 copy/\$10, 5+/\$6 each

Catharsis "Samsara" CD: A Pandora's box of suffering and tragedy, with hope trapped at the bottom... includes four tracks from now-unavailable 7" record (once on the now-unavailable eponymous first cd).

1 copy/\$10, 5+/\$6 each

Zegota "Namaste" CD: The much anticipated sophomore record from this North Carolina punk band. For those of you who've seen them live, this record truly captures the spirit, energy and artistry of a live Zegota show, from beginning to end, creating a record that captivates the body, soul and mind. 71 minutes of musical improvisations, new songs, medleys, and their cover of Neil Young's "Ohio." When I first got this record it was the only thing I listened to for an entire week (and I listen to music almost non-stop). Comes with hand-screened packaging and elaborate booklet, etc.

1 copy/\$8, 5+/\$5 each

Zegota Movement in the Music CD/LP: Their soulful, youthful, idealistic debut record.

CD-1 copy/\$8, 5+/\$5 each; LP (import)-1 copy/\$10, 5+/\$6 each

Umlaut "Havoc Wreakers" LP: Ready to wreak whatever havoc must be wrought... Holy Shit! Song titles like "Thrill of the Open Road" and "Duct Tape and Distortion" with matching lyrics: *Come on! Let's blow this town, raze the streets to rubble—set a land speed record for causing trouble—I want to ride a sonic boom across a land with no borders, I'll be the crash test dummy of the No World Order! Yeah!* 28 songs of wild abandon and an utter refusal to give in, this record will break your fuckin' record player. Comes with an elaborate 28 page half-size booklet. Released by Finland's Combat Rock Industry Records. *So don't rock the vote—vote with the rock, mothers and fuckers! The hand that cradles the rock rules the world! Rock around the clock!*
(import) 1 copy/\$10, 5+/\$6 each

Aluminum Noise "Totally Fucking Lost" CD: A d.i.y. experimental noise project undertaken by kids who set out to broaden the spectrum of the audio arts, challenging everyone's conceptions of what music itself is. This recording has a haunting beauty, made sharper by a tension that steadily increases over the seventy minutes of music, rather than discharging itself. We think it's fucking amazing, like feeling new chambers of the heart being carved out—but the average pop punk listener will probably find himself alienated and confused.

1 copy/\$6, 5+/\$4 each

Ire "What Seed, What Root?" CD: Their last recording. Five songs of their great political sludgy French Canadian hardcore.
\$10; 5+/\$6.60

Timebomb Full Wrath of the Slave CD: Italian, vegan straight edge, anarcho-communist black metal.

1 copy/\$7, 5+/\$4

"In Our Time" LP: compilation with Damad, Systral, Gehenna, Timebomb, Jesuit, Final Exit, Congress and an elaborate insert discussing standardization of our world under capitalism... and what to do about it. Beautiful packaging and vinyl.

1 copy/\$8, 5+/\$4 each

SCISSORS

Wheatpasting Posters: A variety of 11"x17" posters celebrating resistance and lampooning the war on terrorism, the psychiatric industrial complex, etc.—perfect for public redecorating.
Free with orders

Sticker Kits: For adjusting public spaces to broadcast messages that line up with reality. Currently, two designs are available: "this phone is tapped" (as per the Patriot Act) for telephones, and "fortified with 100% pure Iraqi blood" for gas pumps/SUVs.

\$5 for 100—sorry about the high price, we're selling these at exactly what it costs to make and mail them

PickAxe/Breaking the Spell video: The second edition/ reprinting of this 158 minute tape featuring these two excellent documentary films. *PickAxe* revolves around an anarchist struggle to save a forest (Warner Creek) in Oregon from logging; *B.T.S.* covers the events at the infamous W.T.O. meeting in Seattle, and the ensuing media focus on "Eugene Anarchists." Arrange a public showing at your school, house, or community center.

1 copy is \$12, 2-4/\$12 each, 5-10/\$8 each

Coming next: A new issue of our free tabloid Harbinger, a new Face Down in Shit CD/LP, discography CD sets from Umlaut and Catharsis, a new anarchist cookbook... then we'll get down to fucking business.

Anarchy Triumphs Again

In autumn of 2001 I sat with my band in the Kopi squat in Berlin, eating a delicious meal prepared for us by a local friend. The many residential floors above us hummed with activity, squatters and artists and dissidents of literally dozens of nations and cultures chatting and cooking and repairing together; around us, hundreds of punk rockers were gathering for the show. The room with the stage was huge, and featured the most sophisticated sound equipment I had ever seen in a d.i.y. space; in fact, Rage Against the Machine had asked to play here on their last European tour, but the squatters had turned them down on account of all the compromises the band had made with the capitalist culture industry. The neighborhood around the squat was alive with infoshops and gathering places and radical culture, so much so that the yearly Mayday festivals inevitably turned into violent clashes with the repressive police.

As I sat and looked around at all these beautiful, crazy people and all the structures they'd created and defended against the demands of the market and its enforcers, it hit me: sixty years ago there were no anarchists or queers or rebels in Germany—they were all dead, imprisoned, or overseas. Just two generations back, there was nothing like this in Berlin or within a thousand miles of it. I was looking upon solid proof that the burning passion of human beings for freedom and creation cannot be extinguished: the bureaucrats and fascists can threaten us, bully us, even slaughter entire generations (Latin America, the Soviet Union, Palestine), but their very children will grow up to defy them, as if raised by the ghosts of their parents' foes. A mere three decades after the Nazis reigned supreme here, squats like Kopi were appearing all around this city, thousands were filling the streets to contest the status quo, white children of the middle class were even taking up arms and risking their lives to fight in solidarity with those in the third world whose exploitation benefited their rich parents.

Maybe we haven't beaten fascism and oppression once and for all yet, but they've had their chance to finish us off, and failed.

So before the war—any war, every war—even begins, we know who the winners will be: us, the anarchists. Call us by that name or any other—we who treasure freedom-to above power-over, who stake our lives on mutual aid rather than cannibalism, we shall prevail as we have always prevailed. We've been defeated in every revolution, crushed by every regime, persecuted with every torture known to humanity, and still we come out on top.

Wait—isn't that pure arrogance, the ultimate in over-privileged disregard for the suffering of those who die under the bombs of the empire-builders? And—historically speaking—isn't it just plain inaccurate? Haven't we in fact lost everything over and over, failed whenever we had a chance, been conquered in every struggle?

No, my friends, we haven't, and it's not arrogant to celebrate the miracle of our survival. Let's look at what is meant by this word, failure. We compete badly in their market economies—is it failure to focus instead on living out our dreams, to whatever extent we're able? We are anonymous, unknown, unsung—is it success to spend one's life in struggle against others for status? We have a penchant for lost causes, naïve idealism, emotional excesses—is it nobler to choose popular causes that make one stupid and unfeeling, or to embrace the paralysis of cynicism? We are not failures—we have

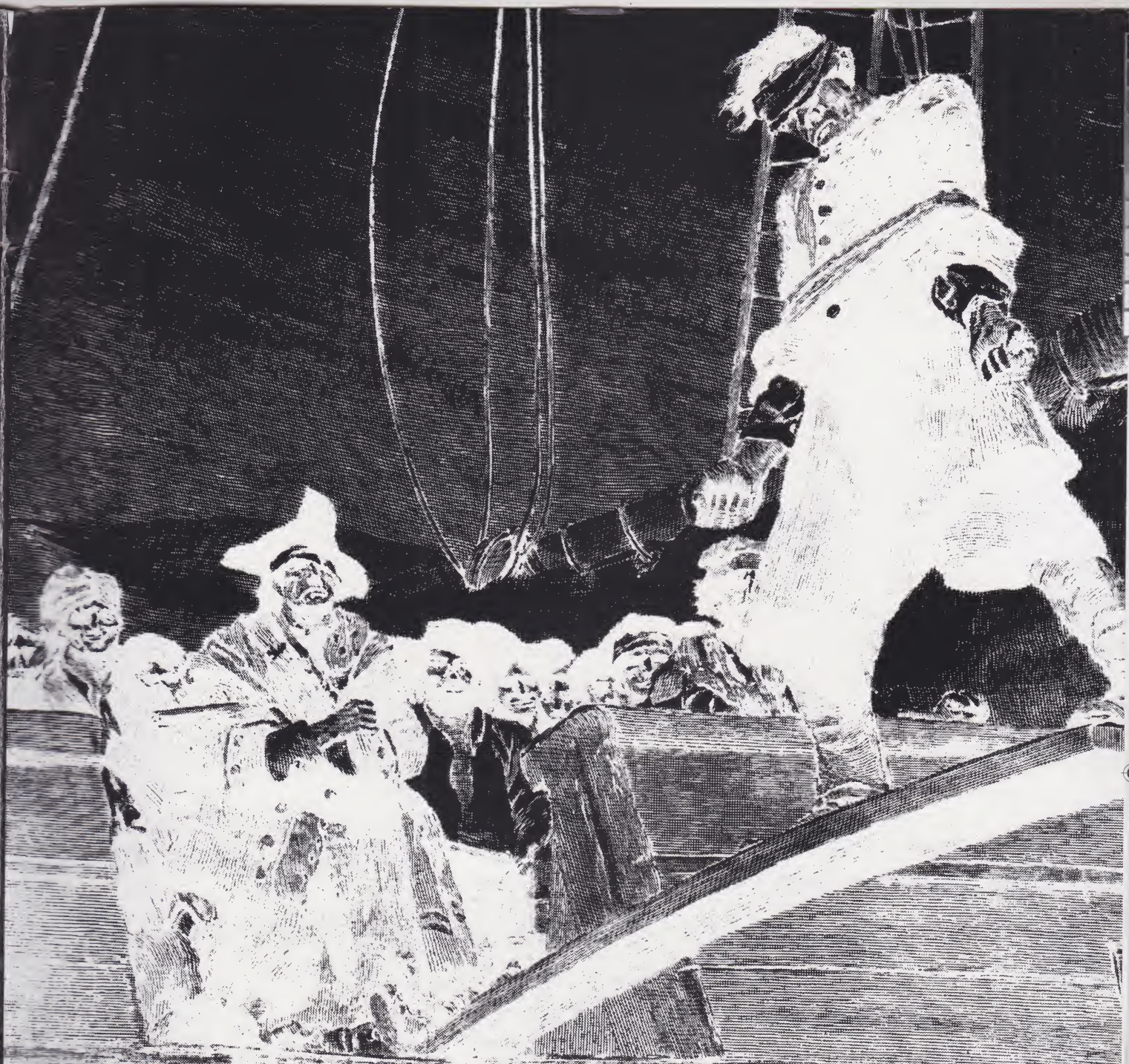
shown brilliance in sensing which wars not to win, which victories would be our downfall, for we know whenever some triumph at the expense of others, all are defeated. That we anarchists, at least those who deserve the appellation, have never traded integrity for power is perhaps our greatest achievement; it even suggests that, should we one day vanquish all the oppressors we struggle against, we might be able to succeed in establishing true freedom where every champion has failed to before.

There are no shortcuts to real revolution. Even capturing the White House would mean nothing, unless everyone else was ready to ignore (or defend themselves against) its new occupants. The worst thing that could happen would be for some of us to seize power in a nation of people who had not yet learned to exercise power over their own lives, and be forced to rule our fellow human beings—not that that would be any worse than the countless times throughout history that has *already* happened! We won't be ready for a total anarchist revolution until we can *make one*, collectively. The struggle for state power is a struggle we've been smart enough to lose, thus far, as we concentrate on developing individuals' powers of self-determination.

To refuse to take power when one would have to wield it over others, to focus even in the face of the greatest affronts on affirming life rather than seeking revenge—these are tremendous triumphs. Some victories are more humiliating than a thousand defeats: communism, fascism, capitalism, all these have won and had their chance over the past century, and thus been shown to fail. Anarchy, the dream of communities based on cooperation and respect, is the one scheme that has not yet had the opportunity to be tested on a mass scale in our civilization. It is the one hope for humanity—not only in some possible future, but also whenever it exists between individuals today: for wherever human beings are free to live as they see fit, wherever relationships blossom outside the logic of coercion, there life is worth living. It is those moments in which anarchy reigns that keep us alive, both individually and as a species. Without the counterweight that joy provides to the lust for vengeance, without the moments when cooperation and compassion win out over antagonism, we would have annihilated each other long ago.

They are the losers, then, who invest themselves in the order of today's victors. "Join us—we're doomed," their billboards might as well beseech new generations: their killings cannot nurture life, their industrial economy cannot last more than a few more decades before the planet itself gives way beneath it. Better join us—we are doomed, useless and damned in their world of destructive production and judgmental piety, and thus endowed with a new world far older and more durable than theirs.

In a cubicle at the library, a boy listens through battered headphones to a new punk anthem of hardship, resilience, and triumph, and steels his will for a lifetime of resistance. In a maximum-security prison cell, Mumia Abu Jamal holds out with the strength and patience of a song by Peter Tosh. In a bedroom, a teenager looks at herself in a mirror and feels, for the first time, that she herself is her own standard of beauty, not some airbrushed magazine cover; at that same moment, an aging Iraqi father embraces his crippled son. In the face of warfare and tyranny and terror, against all the usual insurmountable odds, anarchy triumphs again.



Victory from
the jaws of Defeat

The importance of a suburban struggle has usually been underestimated, it is really very great. A good operation of this type extended over a wide area paralyzes almost completely the commercial and industrial life of the sector and places the entire population in a situation of unrest, of anguish, almost of impatience for the development of violent events that will relieve the period of suspense.
-Che Guevara, Guerrilla Warfare



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